

## by

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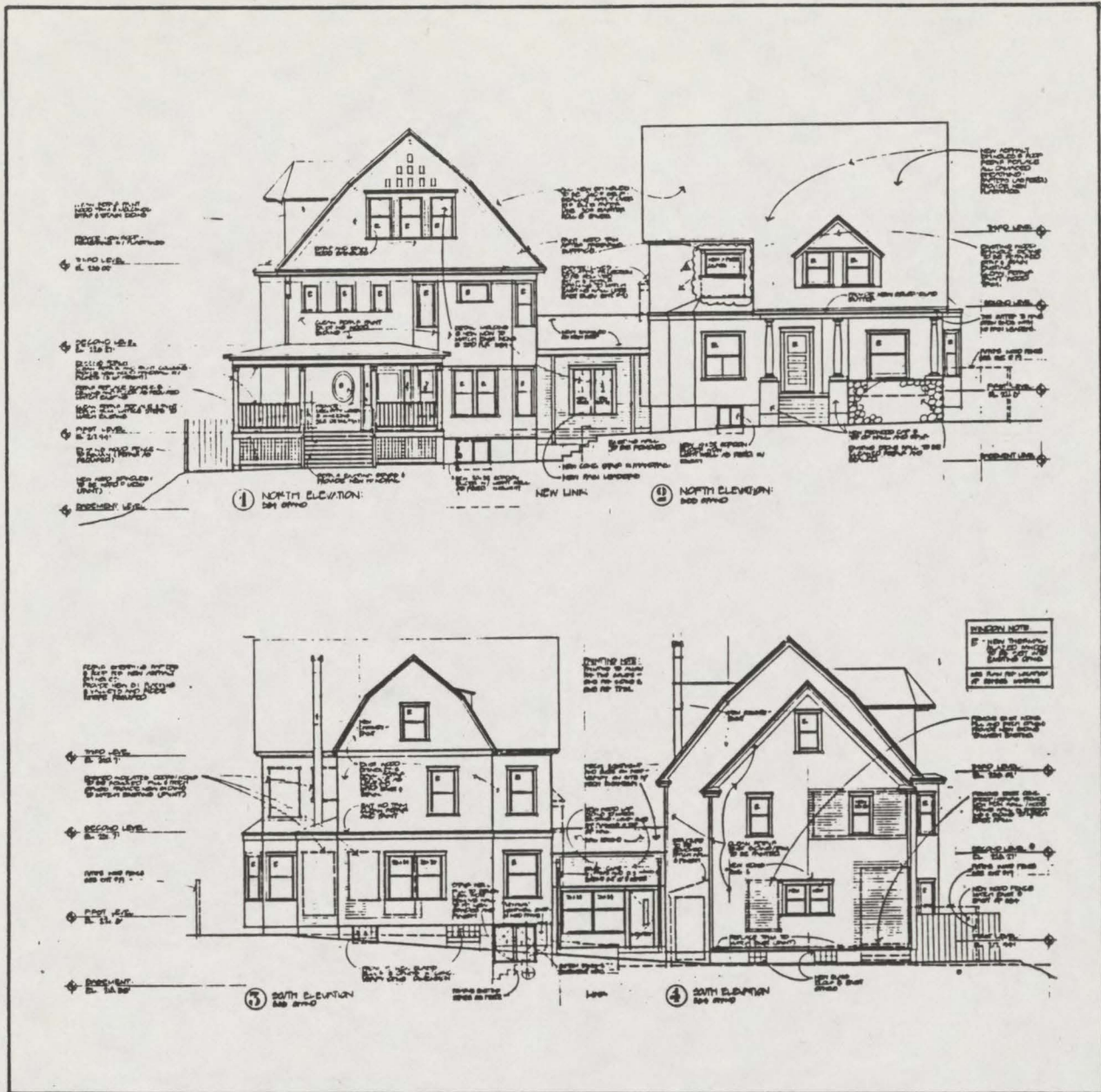
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## PART I

### WOMEN'S ADVOCATES SHELTER AND THE SECTION 8 PROGRAM

## INTRODUCTION

This is a report to the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency on the use of the HUD Section 8 program in the Women's Advocates shelter for battered women in St. Paul and on the effectiveness of the design of the shelter as rehabilitated. The study was made for MHFA by Julia Robinson, Assistant Professor of Architecture with the assistance of Jennifer Schlimgen and Razel Solow, students in architecture and Warner Shippee, program coordinator in the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs.

The Minnesota Housing Finance Agency asked that the following issues be addressed:

1. Future use of the Section 8 program for this purpose (shelters for battered women).
2. Problems encountered in using Section 8 for housing victims of domestic violence such as determination and verification of family income and the 30 day lease requirement.
3. The effect of the design on the tenants and staff.
4. Analysis of Section 8 Program administration for battered family shelters compared to administration of other Section 8 Housing.

The design of the buildings and its effect on the tenants and staff has been studied by Professor Robinson and the architecture students, and their findings are covered in Part II of this report. The other issues (1, 2 and 4) have been discussed in Part I by Warner Shippee.



Women's Advocates is a women's collective which provides a number of related services to women in St. Paul and the surrounding area. It has been in existence since 1971. In addition to various kinds of counselling and supportive services for women in crisis, Women's Advocates maintains and manages a shelter for battered and threatened women and their children at 584 Grand Avenue in St. Paul, Minnesota. The Grand Avenue shelter has recently been rehabilitated and expanded with the assistance of federal Section 8 substantial rehabilitation financing provided through the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency. Construction work on the shelter was essentially completed by December 1981 and it has been fully occupied subsequently.

### THE RESIDENTS

The clientele of the Women's Advocates shelter are women who have been subjected to domestic violence and have had to leave their previous abodes to seek safe shelter for themselves and their children. They usually are without funds, frequently have no source of income and may only possess the clothes which they and their children are wearing. During 1981 the shelter housed 224 women and 255 children. The average stay for women was 12 days and for children 17 days. The greater length of children's occupancy reflects the greater difficulty that families with many children have in finding adequate permanent housing. Many of those who were turned down because there was no available space at the shelter received assistance in finding alternative housing. Fifty of the 224 families housed were of minority races.

Table I shows comparable occupancy statistics for the first 6 months of 1982 during which time the newly rehabilitated shelter was fully available. The shelter is presently able to house approximately 35 women and children at any one time in its fifteen bedrooms, allowing each family one or two bedrooms depending on its size.

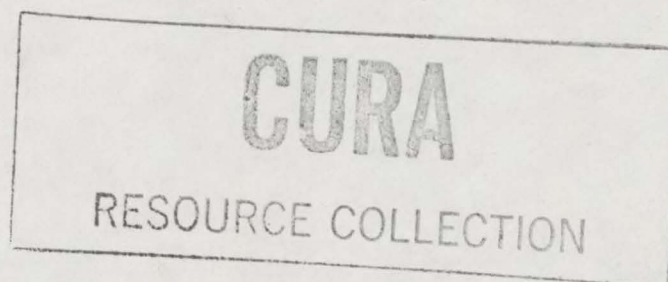
TABLE I. Women's Advocates Emergency Housing Statistics

January 1 - June 30, 1982

| <u>Number Housed Each Month</u> | <u>Women</u> | <u>Children</u> | <u>Total</u> |
|---------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|
| January                         | 45           | 41              | 86           |
| February                        | 30           | 34              | 64           |
| March                           | 32           | 48              | 80           |
| April                           | 27           | 40              | 67           |
| May                             | 44           | 56              | 100          |
| June                            | <u>38</u>    | <u>60</u>       | <u>98</u>    |
| Total                           | 216          | 279             | 495          |

| <u>Number of New Residents each month</u> | <u>Women</u> | <u>Children</u> | <u>Total</u> |
|---|--------------|-----------------|--------------|
| January                                   | 34           | 31              | 65           |
| February                                  | 25           | 28              | 53           |
| March                                     | 21           | 33              | 54           |
| April                                     | 21           | 28              | 49           |
| May                                       | 33           | 37              | 70           |
| June                                      | <u>26</u>    | <u>37</u>       | <u>63</u>    |
| Total                                     | 160          | 194             | 354          |

SOURCE: Women's Advocates Request for Funding from United Way of St. Paul Area for 1983.





## THE ORGANIZATION, WOMEN'S ADVOCATES

Women's Advocates is a collective made up of staff and volunteers who work at the shelter and share responsibilities for the work and decisions which accompany it. There is no director or hierarchy, although there is specialization of responsibilities and functions. Decisions and policy determinations are made collectively. (A detailed description of the development of Women's Advocates from its inception in 1971 is contained in the report Women's Advocates, The Story of a Shelter, St. Paul, 1980.)

The current staff includes:

- 7 advocates for women
- 2 advocates for children
- 1 relief person
- 1 bookkeeper
- 3 business office staff

In addition there are about 20 active trained volunteers who assist in the work at the shelter and in manning the 24 hour emergency telephone assistance service which handled 12, 496 calls in 1981 and is an important part of the work of Women's Advocates.

Women's Advocates maintains a close working relationship with many different social agencies, womens' support groups, the County Department of Human Services, the St. Paul Police Department, the State Department of Corrections, HUD and the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency among others.

## FINANCES

The cost of recent reconstruction and rehabilitation and expansion of the shelter, including security changes which were added after completion of construction, totals approximately \$520,000 of which \$348,463 was provided by a mortgage through MHFA. Table II shows the other sources of funds for the building.

Women's Advocates operations budget is funded from five primary sources:

|  | Estimated<br>1983 Budget |
|--|--------------------------|
| MN Department of Corrections Battered Women's Program  | \$ 79,250                |
| Ramsey County Human Services Dept. Purchase of Service | 108,300                  |
| Ramsey County Human Services Dept. General Assistance  |                          |
| maintenance per diems                                  | 152,000                  |
| Private Donations                                      | 16,754                   |
| St. Paul United Way                                    | 83,000                   |
| Total  | <u>\$439,304</u>         |

TABLE II. Source of Funds for Women's Advocates Shelter

|   |              |
|---|--------------|
| Minnesota Housing Finance Agency Mortgage       | \$348,463    |
| Community Development Block Grant               |              |
| City of St. Paul                                | 35,000       |
| Minnesota Department of Corrections             | 8,450        |
| Church Women United                             | 2,000        |
| Minnesota Women in Housing                      | 400          |
| Alice O'Brien Foundation                        | 8,500        |
| Aimee Mott Butler Foundation                    | 5,000        |
| St. Paul Companies                              | 20,000       |
| General Mills Foundation                        | 10,000       |
| Otto Bremer Foundation                          | 6,000        |
| Bush Foundation                                 | 21,600       |
| McKnight Foundation                             | 11,000       |
| Dayton Hudson Foundation                        |              |
| B. Dalton, Target Stores, Dayton's, J.B. Hudson | 14,790       |
| St. Paul Foundation                             | 20,979       |
| Deluxe Check Foundation                         | <u>8,000</u> |
| Total   | \$520,182    |

Source: Women's Advocates Request for Funding from United Way of St. Paul Area for 1983.



In effect, Section 8 payments from HUD support the physical shelter by paying the amortization and interest on the mortgage as well as building maintenance and operating costs, while the other budgetary sources finance the various programs of Women's Advocates including the day to day operations of the shelter. Of the total, 74 percent goes for personnel costs and 14 percent for maintenance, meals etc.

#### USE OF THE SECTION 8 PROGRAM

Section 8 has proven to be effective in the rehabilitation, expansion and operations of the Women's Advocates Shelter. Both the Women's Advocates staff and the people with whom they work in the HUD Area Office and the Minnesota State Housing Finance Agency appear to have been creative and constructive in adapting regular Section 8 procedures to the special circumstance of a shelter for battered women. The pages which follow discuss each of the issues regarding Section 8 and the shelter for battered women although the order of discussion has been changed.

#### Future Use of Section 8 for this Purpose

There seems to be no reason why the Section 8 programs should not be available for battered women's shelters if Section 8 is continued by the Congress. Such projects might be limited to those in which the sponsoring agency is carrying on a recognized comprehensive program of assistance to battered women. Such recognition could be evidenced, as in the case of Women's Advocates, by support received from local, state, public, and private human services agencies. HUD regulations might be changed to explicitly recognize families subject to domestic violence as a special group to be served. For this group the advantages of a lease with a shorter term than thirty days could be recognized without opening up the program to transient housing in general. As long as the people are eligible by virtue of their family makeup and income this should not be a problem.

#### Analyses of Section 8 Program Administration for Battered Family Shelters Compared to Administration of Other Section 8 Housing.

Administration of the program by Women's Advocates varies from that of other Section 8 Housing with respect to clientele, the program of the sponsor and the anticipated length of occupancy.

a. Clientele.

In some important respects the families which Women's Advocates assists resemble other Section 8 families and in other respects they are quite different. These families, like other Section 8 recipients, meet the basic Section 8 eligibility requirements of definition of family. They all consist of women and their children. They also are virtually all eligible by virtue of their low incomes. Many of them are on welfare when they come to the shelter or are accepted for emergency welfare assistance or aid to dependent children during their stay at the shelter. Those who are employed usually have low-paying jobs which are within the Section 8 income limits.

Women's Advocates residents are different from most Section 8 recipients in other important respects. When they come to Women's Advocates they are in need of a variety of supportive services including housing. They need protection from violence and the threat of violence. They are frequently without any material resources. They are usually suffering from psychological trauma of varying degrees of severity. They are in desperate need of a safe haven and a nurturing social and psychological environment. Their children are often frightened and distraught. Usually their housing need is two-fold. They need an interim shelter and immediately available support services. They also need to work out a longer range solution to their problems including housing. Women's Advocates assists them in both aspects of their need, providing interim shelter and assisting them in solving their longer range problems.

b. Women's Advocates Program

Women's Advocates is not a typical Section 8 housing owner. Women's Advocates is much more than a landlord. They have taken responsibility not only for providing shelter but also for providing for all of the other needs of a family which is temporarily unable to provide for itself. Assistance is given both directly and through referral to responsible agencies or institutions. Women's Advocates acts as sort of a trustee for the residents during the period of occupancy, although the residents are always free to act on their own behalf.

Women's Advocates is a human service institution of 10 years standing in the St. Paul community, and has established trust relationships with a large number of public and private organizations. Few social agencies of their size have been able to draw upon such a variety of sources. Unlike the usual landlord, Women's Advocates is not under a financial compulsion to prolong the stay of their residents. The continuing need for shelter by other families is so great that there are always applicants with critical housing



needs. This is not to suggest that Women's Advocates pushes families out before they are prepared to leave. Indeed, they continue to provide supportive services after the family feels safe to leave and has alternative housing available.

c. Length of Occupancy

A major difference between the Women's Advocates shelter and the typical Section 8 new construction or substantial rehabilitation development, is the admittedly interim or transient nature of the shelter provided. In establishing Section 8, Congress was concerned that the program be used to assist families in finding more or less permanent housing solutions and not be used to subsidize hotels, motels or other typical short term housing. In the case of the families who are sheltered by Women's Advocates, however, the interim nature of the housing provided is an advantage and squares with the philosophy underlying much of the housing assistance legislation. The residents of the shelter are temporarily in dire need of safe housing and other material and psychological support. When their lives have become more stable and community resources have been brought to bear to assure their safety, they are again ready to move to housing in the general market. They can leave the shelter and make way for other families in similar need. Thus the shelter can assist a great many more families with the same expenditure of public subsidy than it would be if the occupancy was of long duration and the shelter was providing permanent housing. For example during the first six months of 1982, Women's Advocates was able to provide interim shelter for 211 families including almost 500 people. If the average duration of occupancy had been six months, the fifteen bedrooms at the shelter would only have been able to house some 35 people. On a yearly basis at present capacity the shelter will assist over 400 families.

Subsidized housing historically has been thought of as a help to people who sooner or later would find housing in the unsubsidized private market. Although this objective has been frustrated by the tight housing market and high costs, it still remains a major goal. As far back as 1947, for example, the Minnesota Housing and Redevelopment Act limited occupancy to a maximum of four years in public housing.

HUD Section 8 subsidies have been available to Women's Advocates only for tenants who are in occupancy for 30 days or longer (actually counting three days for turnover, this may be 27 days.) Women's Advocates therefore, has been unable to obtain subsidies for eligible tenants who occupy the premises for shorter periods. An eligible family might be in occupancy for 15 days, move out and be immediately succeeded by another eligible family which stays 15 days and no subsidy will be paid. If either family had stayed 30 days or longer the subsidy would have been forthcoming. This has meant that Women's

Advocates has been unable to collect substantial amounts of subsidy which would have been paid if the occupancy rule had not been in effect. Subsidies have begun to lag seriously behind the amounts budgeted for amortization and interest payments. The deficits are being made up by Women's Advocates from funds budgeted for other purposes. This expedient cannot be continued long without jeopardizing the Women's Advocates program.

Women's Advocates staff working with HUD area office and MHFA management people are considering a procedure by which the 30 day leases would be written with those eligible families occupying the unit at a set time in the month, most probably the beginning. Subsidies would be paid for eligible lessees. If the tenant did not occupy the premises for the full 30 days, she would still be liable for the rent although Women's Advocates would move in some other eligible family for the remainder of the lease. This family would in turn sign a lease at the beginning of the following month.

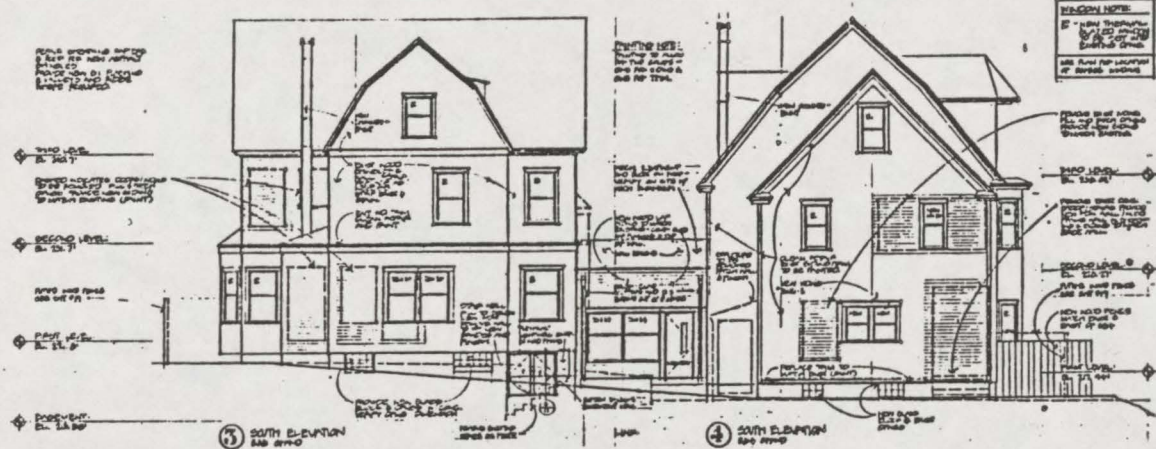
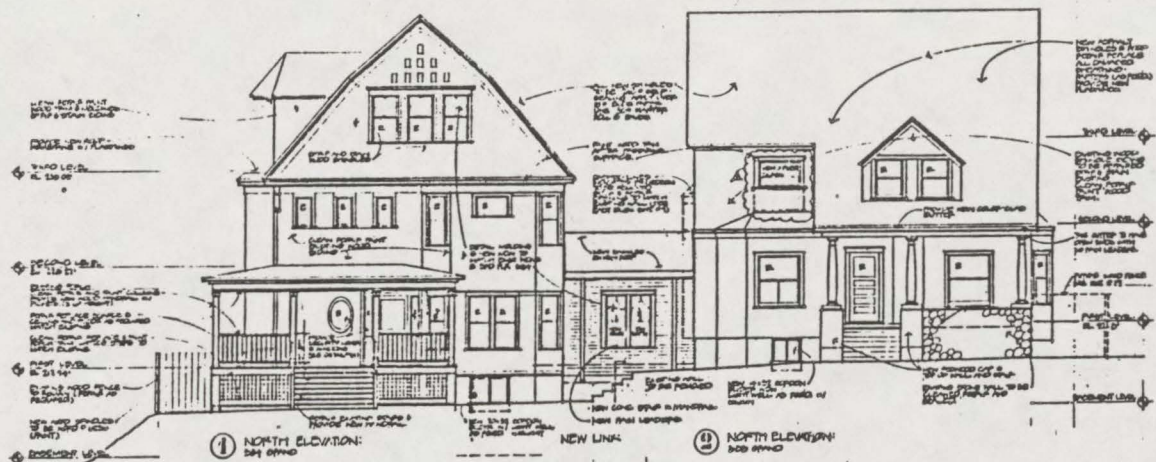
This proposal has much merit. It would allow Women's Advocates to continue to serve an optimum number of people without limiting themselves to residents who actually stay for 30 days or longer. It is obviously crucial to fit the program to the needs of the women and not prolong their stay in the shelter when their best interests are served by moving on to other more satisfactory housing arrangements. They and their children can resume more nearly normal lives and living arrangements. Recognizably, life at the shelter provides security and support in time of crisis, but is not intended to provide a continuing long term solution to a family's housing need. The changed lease procedure would work well for the Women's Advocates program without violating Section 8 requirements.

Problems Encountered in Using Section 8 Housing Victims of Domestic Aggression, such as the Determination and Verification of Income and the Thirty Day Lease Requirement.

Determination and verification of income do not appear to have presented any overriding problems. Husbands' income cannot be counted as income for shelter residents because they are not members of the household as defined by Section 8 regulations and their income is not available to the family. Many families are essentially without income. Most, if they are already on welfare, are applicants for emergency assistance. Women's Advocates accepts the Ramsey County Department of Human Services findings as to income in these situations.

The 30 day lease requirement has been discussed earlier. In sum, the requirement will not prove a problem if the procedure is changed so that all leases date from the beginning or from a specific time in the month with people in occupancy at that time signing the leases, or if the requirement should be changed to allow a shorter term lease.





## PART II

### ARCHITECTURAL EVALUATION OF THE WOMEN'S ADVOCATES SHELTER

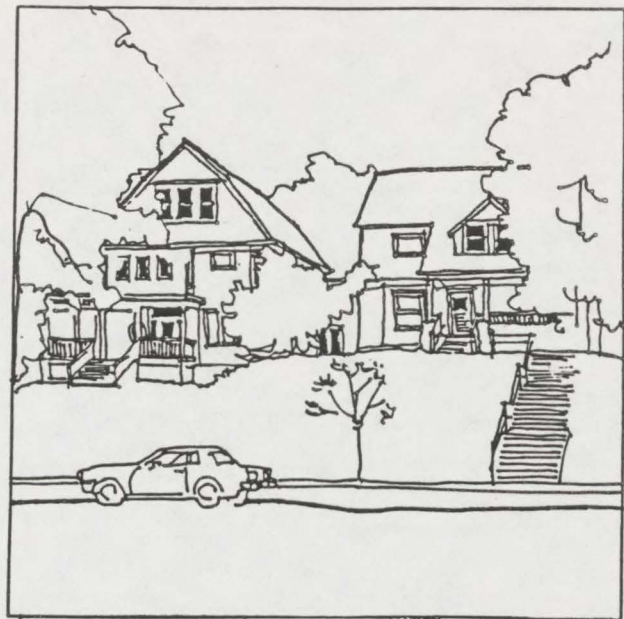
## PROLOGUE

The process of renovating the Women's Advocates shelter in St. Paul was a struggle financially, emotionally and architecturally. The difficulties caused by the decision to renovate two deteriorating structures at great cost suggests that it would have been far simpler to build a new building. But the Women's Advocates saw in the two houses some valuable assets they were unwilling to give up. The intrinsic beauty of the houses and their compatibility with the existing neighborhood contributed to the acceptance of the residence by the neighbors. The location was ideal, and the difficulties inherent in new construction might have jeopardized the shelter's standing in the neighborhood. The houses themselves had certain inherent homelike qualities which the advocates feared might be lost if a new structure, one which would have to adhere strictly to institutional codes, were to be built.

The decision to renovate created great difficulties at the same time that it preserved important elements of the buildings. The architects had to reconcile restrictive safety codes with the existing wooden structures. What they had were two family houses in which they needed to place a number of families and support personnel, a group defined by the state as an institution. This seemingly irresolvable paradox was the challenge which forced the advocates and the architects to better understand the nature of a battered women's shelter. They discovered that they could strike a balance between meeting the institutional requirements while maintaining a homelike atmosphere. Had the architects started from scratch, that balance might have eluded them. The character of the old house resisted the new constraints. The architects were forced to make adjustments which moderated the institutional influences. The resulting shelter succeeds in that it conveys a feeling of home while simultaneously meeting code.



## 1. INTRODUCTION



According to Del Martin, author of Battered Wives, the 1976 classic study of battered women, the Women's Advocates shelter in St. Paul, Minnesota is the "best known refuge in the United States." Opened in October 1974, it was certainly one of the first. In the eight intervening years, hundreds of women's shelters have emerged nationwide in a grass-roots movement dedicated to providing safe spaces for women in dire need of protection.

Many of the latest shelters are in quarters similar to those in which Women's Advocates began, temporary apartment lodgings or ramshackle houses; others are in church buildings, YWCA's, and volunteers' own homes. Del Martin describes a woman who was content with the mere basics because she had nowhere else to go.

An English woman who had been severely beaten by her husband testified that she had gone through ten different agencies before finally finding a refuge for battered wives, "with one cooker with one ring working and a grill for 12 families and 25 children. We lived there with no windows, no heating, no playground or clothes for the children. But anything would've done for me then; I wouldn't have cared where I'd gone." (Battered Wives, p.xiii)

Women's Advocates have not been content with providing the mere basics because they believe that battered women deserve better. Their steadfast commitment to an improved environment in their shelter culminated with the 1981 renovation of the two, linked houses on Grand Avenue.

This evaluation is the result of a study of the renovated Women's Advocates shelter. More precisely, this report examines the original intentions of the architect, the landscape architect, and the clients (Women's Advocates) to determine what they wanted the environment to provide the users (battered women and their children). Then, the report looks at the shelter as it was built and as it is used today. Our methods of research included interviews with the architects, residents and staff, participant observation, as well as mapping of activity and physical traces in the shelter. This architectural inquiry, funded by MHFA, pinpoints the strengths and identifies the problems of the Women's Advocates shelter. Because it is the study of only one particular shelter, we are hesitant to provide general design guidelines. Instead, we hope that our critique of specific architectural features might contribute to the future design of shelters.

The report begins with a description of the Women's Advocates history and their daily activities. Then follows a chapter dealing with expectations for the shelter, a chapter on general considerations, four chapters on evaluation of specific spaces, and a conclusion.



## A SHORT HISTORY

Originally called "Women's House," the shelter on Grand Avenue grew out of the work of a collective known as the Women's Advocates. They were a group of women who wanted to help other women learn their legal rights on a myriad of issues. As their advising work evolved, they found that a great number of women wanted advice on the divorce process. Many of those women cited physical battering as a prime motive for leaving their marriages. "Women in our community told us that what they needed most was a safe place to go with their children, to be free from violence, in order to even begin to sort out what to do next. The need for emergency housing was the one urgent and recurring problem for which there was no referral (Women's Advocates, p.4)."

The Women's Advocates addressed themselves to this urgent problem immediately. Beginning with providing temporary shelter on the floors of their own homes, the Women's Advocates later moved into a one-bedroom apartment "so that they could offer at least a minimal shelter for a few women while continuing to conduct their phone service (of legal advice) (Battered Wives, p. 199)." The collective had hoped to raise their monies privately. But soon the need for a larger and more permanent structure meant that they would have to solicit public funds as well. Though not easily obtained, enough money was raised to move into their five-bedroom house at 584 Grand Avenue in 1974.

The story of their second house at 588 Grand Avenue has a different telling. In their first couple of years together in the house at 584, the Women's Advocates used to sit and chat freely about their dreams for additional shelter for the many abused women whom they could not house. One day, a staff member made up a story in which she created a skyway to the house next door and solved the problem of the need for additional space. The dilapidated, neighboring structure was an alcoholic flophouse, had been condemned, and was up for sale. The following Saturday morning, the Advocates decided to buy it. Eventually, the dream of a skyway was transformed into the connection between the two houses which is now called the Link.

The Link during construction





Since the structure was in such a sorry condition, the women were able to buy it for \$10,000 and the payment of back taxes. To maintain the building until they could do something about renovating it, however, they had to get a roof on the house immediately. There was some debate among the Advocates, in fact, as to whether they might be better off destroying the building completely and just using the lot itself as a playground for the many children who stayed at the shelter. The general consensus was to save the building for housing space.

It was not only 588 Grand which was in such a horrible state. The old house at 584 had problems aggravated by crowding of people in crisis. More than anything, the Women's Advocates wanted to make their shelter a home for those women who had to leave their own homes so traumatically. One of the staff recalls, "It was pathetic because it couldn't look that way (like a regular home) with the chaos and pain, the violence (they brought) with them. Everything that came in crumbled away; plants died. Windows were covered with film (from all the smoking); (the) smoke detectors couldn't work because women were constantly smoking, and the alarms were always going off..." The smell in the house was bad; there was no ventilation. The basement's limestone walls were disintegrating. The plaster was coming off the walls, and the lathing was showing through. I would hate to bring a new woman into a room with holes in the walls."

The Advocates persisted. They laid the floors in the bathrooms themselves. They painted each bedroom in a different color. New drapes went up. New bedspreads were brought in. But soon everything ripped apart. Children destroyed the shutters within a month. Drapes were torn. So many women and children in crisis moved through the shelter that it could not stand the wear. As things fell apart, they were painstakingly glued back together again.

Lounge before renovation



Bedroom before renovation





The conditions were intolerable and getting worse. "There was a build-up of filth in the kitchen and bathrooms," one Advocate explained. Eighty-year-old pipes caused endless leaking and damage to the ceilings and floors. Despite repeated fumigation, the cockroaches returned. Fires were an ever-present fear in the summers "because of the number of people coming and going and with so much smoking [sic]. We were licensed for a capacity of eleven people, but at one point we had thirty people in a five-bedroom house in the summer. People were sleeping in the living room and in the dining room. We were always on top of each other. We couldn't do advocacy. The women didn't get what we wanted them to." The Advocates set a limit of 18-21 people in the shelter at one time.

That limit did not cure the nagging problems. The refrigerator still leaked, "leaving rotting mold on the floor. The wind came through the cracks in the windows; it even rained in. The plumbing used to plug up; the garbage disposal broke down every two to three weeks. In the old building, there were only two bathrooms. In fact, when a new resident came in, the first thing she saw was an ugly bathroom because usually its door was open. Those old bathrooms were big but not useful." The staff met in an attic where the walls were "silver insulation. There were splintered floors. The room was very cold in the winter (we wore coats), and in the summer it was stifling."

No matter how grateful everyone was to have the shelter, the old building was far from satisfactory. The Advocates never lost their hope of creating some place that could function well both as a cozy home for battered women and as a center for services to domestic abuse victims.

Bookkeeping office before renovation



Third floor meeting space before renovation





## A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE SHELTER

Someone who has never been to a shelter for battered women might be under the misconception that the only service it provides is that of emergency housing. A battered woman may come to a shelter needing immediate assistance, and enter feeling isolated, but she finds a community where staff and other residents offer a variety of supportive functions. At the Women's Advocates shelter, the underlying goal is to help battered women help themselves: to give them the chance to see how they can take control of their own lives. The duration of stay for any resident is not limited; there is no minimum or maximum amount of time allotted. Yet since the need to house women is so great and persistent, the staff asks that new residents try to limit their term of stay to four weeks. During her term of residence, the woman becomes quite familiar with the broad range of services the shelter provides.

As soon as the woman arrives, she is greeted by a Women's Advocate who informs her of the basic house policies and rules. At that point or at some later conference, the Advocate offers legal counseling on issues of divorce, orders for protection, custody, welfare, or pressing criminal charges. Whatever the resident wants to know about, the Advocate helps her find the right reference. Later on during her stay, the woman might get advice on how to adopt a new lifestyle if that is the route she chooses. If she wants to start her life over without violence, she needs to discover alternative housing opportunities, employment-hunting procedures, and may wish to join a support group to help her cope with the enormous upheavals in her life.

While the new resident goes to move into her bedroom, the Women's Advocate has many other responsibilities to handle. When not doing advocacy work with a resident, she may be on the phone in the program office giving advice to a caller. Then there is the crisis phone work which deals with women in imminent danger. There are, of course, staff meetings to attend which focus on overall shelter policy. And there are program meetings which cover issues in the Women's Advocates program specifically. When the Advocate completes her workshift, she meets with her replacement to give her a "state of the house" report.

Living room before renovation



Kitchen before renovation



Meanwhile, the resident is settling into her temporary home. If she has children, she and her children will meet with a Children's Advocate in her office to discuss their special difficulties. Many activities are set up for the children. At first, most children want to be very close to their mothers and are not ready to play independently. But with time and help from the Children's Advocates, children are soon playing and participating in shelter outings. Often, the children are quite disruptive, acting out their anger. The Advocates work with play therapy and counseling to help the children to come to grips with those feelings.

The residents attend a group meeting later at night after dinner is over and the children have been put to bed. A staff member is present as they decide who will take which food preparation and cleaning duties for the next day. The residents are responsible, not only for the cleanliness and orderliness of their own rooms, but also for the care of the entire shelter (i.e., vacuuming, cooking, clean-up). Of course, longer term maintenance chores are left to professionals.

During the day, some women are off at jobs or are out looking for work or new housing. Many women are on the phone, trying to plan new routes for themselves. Much of the day is spent getting to know other residents, offering support and encouragement, watching and caring for children, doing housechores (like laundry), and having advocacy sessions. To offset the anxiety which envelopes most of the women, there is constant smoking, watching television, reading, knitting, and other light recreational activities which are largely focused in the Link area. The shelter is not equipped for women who might want some formal exercising; that must be done individually.

While the hub of resident activity centers on the first floor of the shelter, up on the third floor most of the bureaucratic business operates. In the funding office, the staff's time is consumed with fundraising to keep the shelter open and to find the monies for the furniture, clothes, food, etc. that are vital to its functioning. The bookkeeping department keeps the shelter's records of each woman's visit. Staff members also help individuals with collecting AFDC benefits, when applicable. Finally, there is usually at least one business advocate who spends a great portion of her time dealing with the police. House security, protection regarding individuals, and legalities concerning male partners are just some of the issues which fill her day.

Although each woman's experience in the shelter is different, the components of her stay are alike. She makes her own decisions about her life but gets the support and encouragement of the whole community in the Women's Advocates shelter.



## 2. PLANS AND EXPECTATIONS



What did each participant in the renovation process of the Women's Advocates shelter hope it would produce? We must first look at each contributor's definition of a shelter.

Before the architects became involved in the rehabilitation of the houses, the Women's Advocates had accrued invaluable experience working with abused women. They had a definite philosophy which they brought with them. In their own words:

It is true that the shelters have not brought change to society, but they have made change possible for individual women--sometimes...Working together, living with women in crisis...We became aware of the many effects of abuse on a woman and her children. We did not consider these effects a disease or a syndrome, and sought no cures or treatments for her. Instead, we tried to help her sort out her problems and pull her life together in a way that made sense to her.

We are advocates for the woman. We try to find the help she needs, wherever it may be in the community, searching for professionals who will help her in ways that increase her self-esteem and give her some sense of control over her life. (Women's Advocates, p. 98)

From the Advocates' standpoint, the shelter as a physical environment must reflect those principles. For the woman who must leave her home suddenly because the violence becomes unbearable, it is a transitional home. The battered woman needs a place which welcomes her and provides protection from her abuser, yet also helps her learn to help herself and refuse to be a victim. The image of the shelter is critical. It must convey the feeling of being a home, says one Advocate, because "as a home, it doesn't reinforce (the feeling of) displacement and being cut off from the community." The battered women are the victims, not the criminals. "Nobody wants to live in a prison. Many of these women have been prisoners in their own homes."



Mary Heffernan, the initial designer of the renovations, adds her own perspective. "A shelter as a building type is neither a house nor a treatment center. It is both a residential community and a center for services to battered women and their children who are not currently residents. It has special needs." Some of the issues she addressed were the site issues, the relationship between the inside and the outside of the shelter, and the building issues themselves (including security, children's spaces, communality and privacy, staff, and residential spaces).

Yet she recognized the advocates' underlying approach. "The advocates are trying to encourage independence, teaching women to take control of their own lives." She concluded, "All these issues need to be incorporated in an architectural image that is part of the transformation process that each resident experiences... 'House' has had a special meaning to women historically. The renovated shelter should say to each resident, 'you are important. We the community value you.'"

Mary Heffernan was a drafting student at the time she first became involved with the renovation project for Women's Advocates. By the time they were ready to proceed with drawing up the plans, Mary had already entered the School of Architecture at the University of Minnesota. Since she was still a student, she needed a registered architect to help execute the project. One of her professors, Lee Tollefson, was willing to help. He and his firm's staff recognized the urgent need for this renovation.

Lee described the condition of the shelter. "The building was in poor shape. There were 30 people living in a single family house with between five and eight staff people...There was no money to put the project together." Because he and his staff were extremely concerned about the life safety of the women at the shelter, they went to work even before they could be paid.

Exterior steps before renovation



Shelter during renovation



Lee explained how he viewed the project. "It wasn't a case of traditional design. It was renovating a single family house and turning it into a shelter. it was like changing 'a sow's ear into a silk purse.'" The code constraints did have an overriding impact on cost and on planning the design. But the main difficulty was one of adaptive reuse..."The codes aren't tailored for every consideration. They give general principles for safety. It was difficult to make it a fit between the new program and the type of structure we were dealing with." For instance, Lee's team had to fit four enclosed fire staircases into two houses; those used up a large amount of space. Also, the location of the bedrooms was dictated by the location of the existing windows.

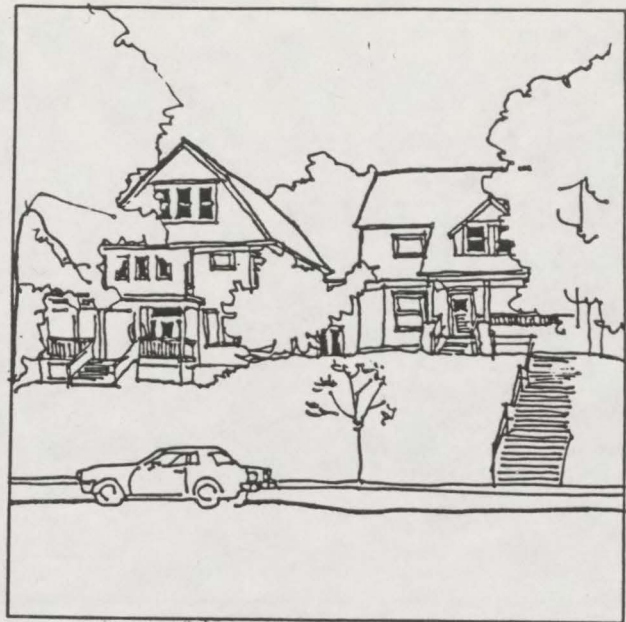
Other practical problems included the contracting for the shelter which was done in two stages. The architects worked completely on the house at 588 Grand Avenue first for six months. While the architects finished the renovation at 584 Grand, the shelter had to move into 588. Since the permanent kitchen was in the house at 584 Grand, that meant that the house at 588 had to work completely independently for six months. The architects had to include a temporary kitchen which was later used for the cooking activities in the Children's Advocates' office.

Jim Robin, the landscape architect for the Women's Advocates shelter, was contacted by Lee Tollefson. In speaking with the collective members, he determined that the primary users were the battered women. "They had been through emotional trauma; their fear level was high. Because of their emotional state, a high priority was given to portraying the image of the shelter as one of protection." Even though he recognized the Advocates's desire to serve the women of the neighborhood by staying in those houses, he felt that "...They picked the worst site they could have. The area was too small for the number of people they wanted to fit onto the site and for their multiple goals." If they had been willing, "it would have made more sense financially" to have gone elsewhere.

As with most building and renovation projects, finance had an overriding impact on the design process. Certain features simply could not be included because they cost too much. For instance, both the staff and the architects wished to preserve the exquisite woodwork trim throughout the two houses. That couldn't be done. Unexpected costs, dictated by local code constraints, meant that other planned elements had to be sacrificed. The new water pipes mandated by the city government cost \$9000. The air-conditioning units cost much more than anticipated. In the end, the backyard lost almost all the vegetation which was supposed to be planted there. The shelter couldn't afford to buy the redwood jungle gym which the landscape architect had envisioned as the focal point for the children's play area outdoors. Cheaper materials for the doors and windows had to be selected in order to stay within the budget. Considering all the cutbacks which had to be made, the renovation of this shelter is an outstanding accomplishment.



### 3. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

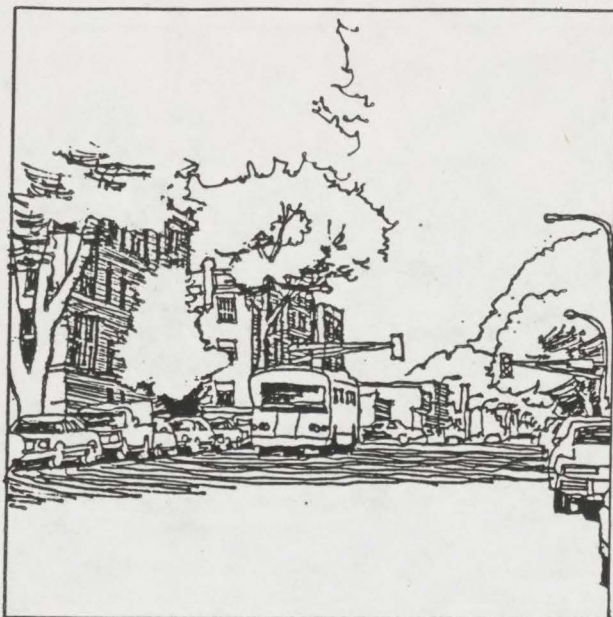


Considerations which affected the overall design of the shelter are site selection, building image, security, and general functioning. Before looking at particular spaces we shall look at how the overall considerations are viewed by designers, advocates and residents and shall evaluate how the renovation responds to these considerations.

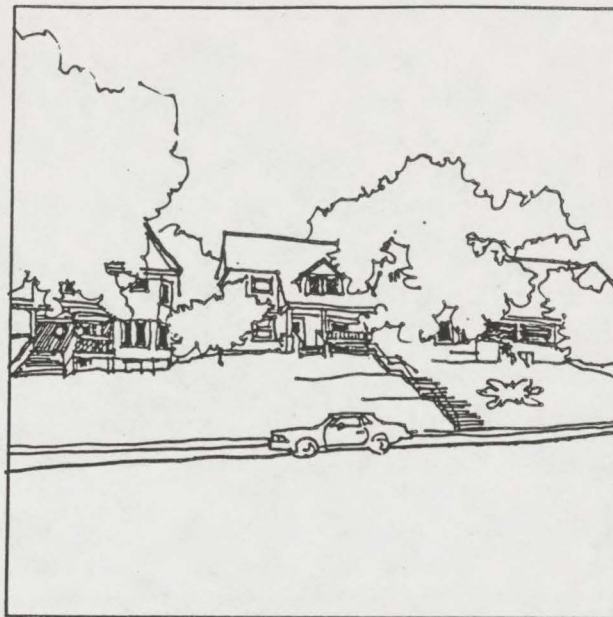
A residential neighborhood near downtown St. Paul and accessible to public transportation was considered an ideal site for the shelter. Because the original residence met these needs so well, the advocates decided to renovate rather than build from scratch on a new site. The image the advocates wanted to achieve was both residential, to match the neighborhood, and secure, to suggest its purpose as a place of refuge. But the shelter not only had to look secure, it had to be secure. As it is not uncommon for angry men to pursue their partners and children, the dwelling needed to protect residents from unwanted intruders. Identification of visitors, visibility of trespassers, and ability to secure potential entrance points were key issues.

Functionally, the design of the residence needed to combine places for administration, for sleeping, for counseling and for the activities of daily living under one roof. These diverse purposes had to coexist without impinging on each other. They needed to function in a mutually supportive way so that the shelter would work as a whole.





The approach on Grand Avenue



The shelter blends with adjacent houses

## SITE

The criteria for site selection which Women's Advocates wanted to meet were: location in a residential neighborhood; location close to downtown St. Paul and accessible to it by public transportation; enough area for children to play outdoors; and a setting which would lend itself to security.

## Comments

"Although I know they would like a downtown location to best serve the neighborhood, the present design lacks a safety valve for kids (for instance, a gym or some recreation spot with a controlled perimeter)... (to) give them a chance to run and scream as they want. A better site might be an abandoned school or commercial building. There'd be better security... And they could construct a roof garden." (Landscape Architect)

"Real good busline and main streets and the neighborhood is so (racially) mixed--that's good." (Staff)

"Wonderful location. There's a neighborhood quality. It's easily accessible to women and to downtown. Nice neighbors are helpful and supportive." (Staff)

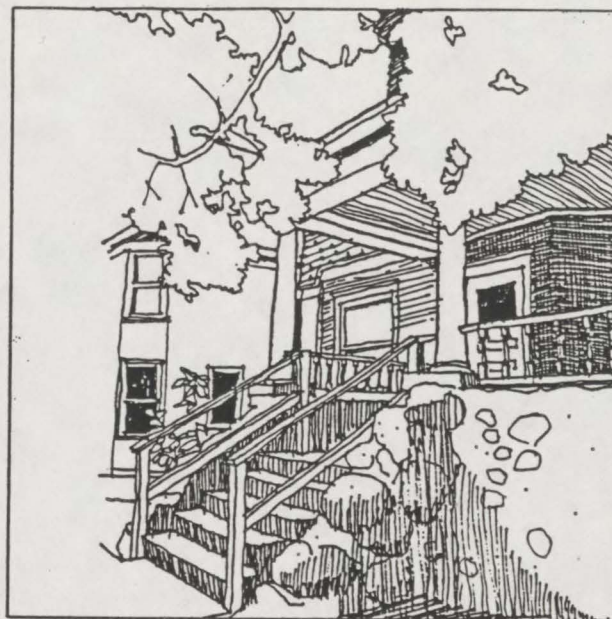
## Evaluation

The location of the residence is within easy reach of downtown and is within walking distance of a small shopping area. The neighbors are accepting of the facility and physically, the structure blends in well. The building being on a hill is fortuitous for security. It makes observation of visitors very easy. And, as actually used, the site does not seem too congested for children's activities. With minor modifications in design, the site will function well.





View of the entry from the sidewalk



The entry porch

## IMAGE

The image Women's Advocates sought for their shelter was a balance between the intimate qualities of a home and the secure qualities of an institution. They wanted the institutional functions to play a backstage role to the central purpose of personal growth of the individual resident.

## Comments

### EXTERIOR DESIGN

"We wanted the facades and front of the houses to look like the rest of the neighborhood. The surroundings were important. We did not want to draw attention to the house any more than necessary." (Landscape Architect)

"The houses are located in an historic preservation district in St. Paul. Essentially, we had to retain the character of the buildings by doing almost nothing to the facades. 584 Grand had a unique architecture: well-crafted, wood construction architecture; we didn't want to make significant changes." (Architect)

The shelter should be a home blending into a neighborhood. "I like the way this looks like any other house on the block. It's easily overlooked." (Resident)

It has to function like a fortress but look and feel like a home. "A fortress would scare people away--not necessarily the abuser, but women needing help." (Resident)

"The image of the house should not be institutional. It must appear as a home in a residential neighborhood." (Staff)





Front porch



View at entry

"It seemed much nicer than I expected." (Resident)

"It's big, homey, and at the same time congested." (Resident)

Most of the staff has seen the change from the old shelter to the new. "Every day there was a new sensation. It was just so wonderful that it was so clean and new, spacious and quiet--it was a nice place to be." (Staff)

### INTERIOR

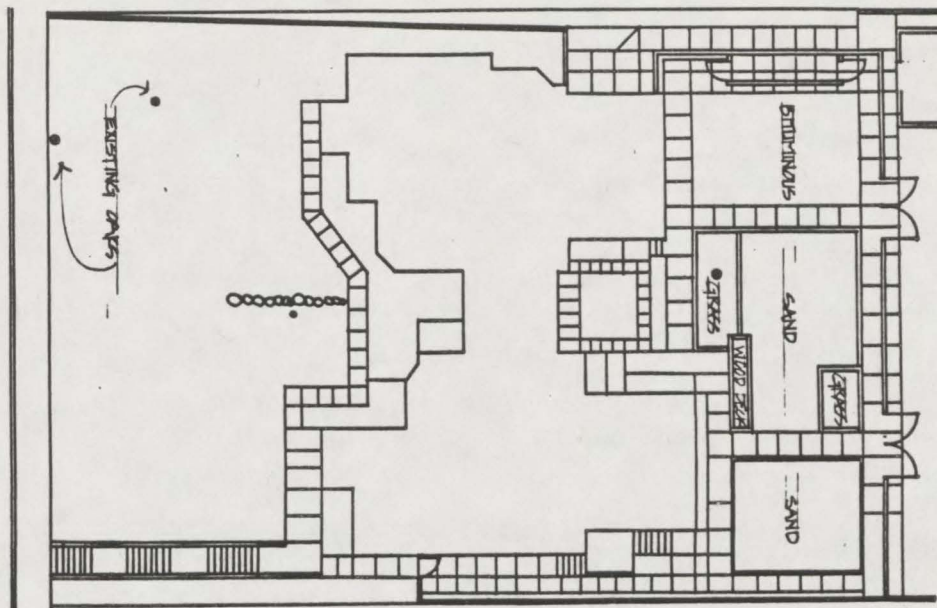
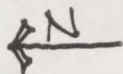
"Beautiful, marvelous! I don't know if I could stand living in the old one." (Staff)

### Evaluation

The Women's Advocates Shelter successfully presents an image of security because it is set back from the street, up on a hill. There is a generous front yard so that anyone approaching the residence can be easily observed. From the street, the facility appears as two houses. There is no sense of it being an institution. This permits it to blend with the neighborhood.

On the inside the shelter appears more institutional. The open plan allows one to observe that there are or could be many people in these buildings. The materials are obviously durable. Office functions exist alongside residential ones. Notwithstanding, there is a house-like quality derived from the scale of the windows from the remaining structural elements of the original houses. It is unfortunate that a lot of the original architectural detailing was lost during renovation, but the spirit still remains. With the addition of artwork, with careful selection of furniture to minimize uniformity, and with placement of furniture to break up the openness of the plan, the homelike aspects could be enhanced.





Site Plan

## SECURITY

For a facility of this kind the importance of security is obvious. The residents must not only be protected from unwanted intrusion, but must have the perception of security and of control which promotes peace of mind.

## Comments

"I created a security zone to the perimeter of the site except for access ( the front stairs and the side service lane). In the front, the sloped yard sets the house back and there is only one entrance at 588 Grand. That limits the access. In the backyard, the children's play space and the small patio space for residents is within a security zone. The fence acts as an opaque barrier. There was an unsolvable problem in the building program. The Catch-22 was the issue of institutional appearance versus sufficient security. We wanted a protected play area for the kids... where the back would be visually screened from the alley. But the police and fire departments felt that officers needed to see into the lot as they patrolled through the back alley." (Landscape Architect) (The compromise was the opaque wood fence which surrounds most of the yard, and a chain-link gate which can open to allow fire trucks in.)

Several of the residents' one-word descriptions of their first feelings upon entering the shelter were "safe."

One woman mentioned that the shelter was "actually kind of a spooky place; you walk in and try to get out of the door (the entry consists of an outer door, a small vestibule, and another door), but I liked the double door protection." (Resident)

"There is an electronic security system linked to the doors; it's used by the staff at night when they are working overnight." (Staff)



The shelter "feels" secure, but, "Chief of Police McCutcheon says that the shelter is not secure; we shouldn't have so many doors and windows." (Staff)

"We can't put security screens on the upper floor windows because of the need to escape a fire. The police warned the architects that the windows they chose were easy for intruders to break in; they snap out." (Staff)

"The front door doesn't close by itself because of the air lock vacuum. It felt safer when the second door was locked, but it's no longer done; people get locked in between the two doors." (Staff)

"The outside birch doorways do not close properly (due to the warping of the cheaper wood); you must pull on (the doors) hard for them to lock. When it's not done, we are left unprotected." (Staff)

"The kids climb over and under the (backyard) fence." (Staff)

### Evaluation

There is an inherent difficulty in combining security with a place for family living. For example, children need to play outdoors freely. In such things as window design there are conflicts between fire safety requirements for easy egress and security requirements for protection from entering. But the needs for protection and safety outweigh the priority for a homelike atmosphere. Where possible, security should be invisible; where not invisible, security measures will be an obvious sign to would-be intruders.

Security was taken into account by the designers. The site design illustrates this well. The first floor windows are secure and the doors were also designed for security. On the second floor fire safety took first priority.

The front entry needs to be adjusted so that visitors can be observed easily from the inside. Perhaps the use of an intercom, one-way mirrored glass, or a peephole would improve this area. Doors which are not functioning should be repaired or replaced. All the windows should have security screens which can be unlatched from the inside in case of fire. The backyard should be secure so that children may have freer access to it than is now possible.





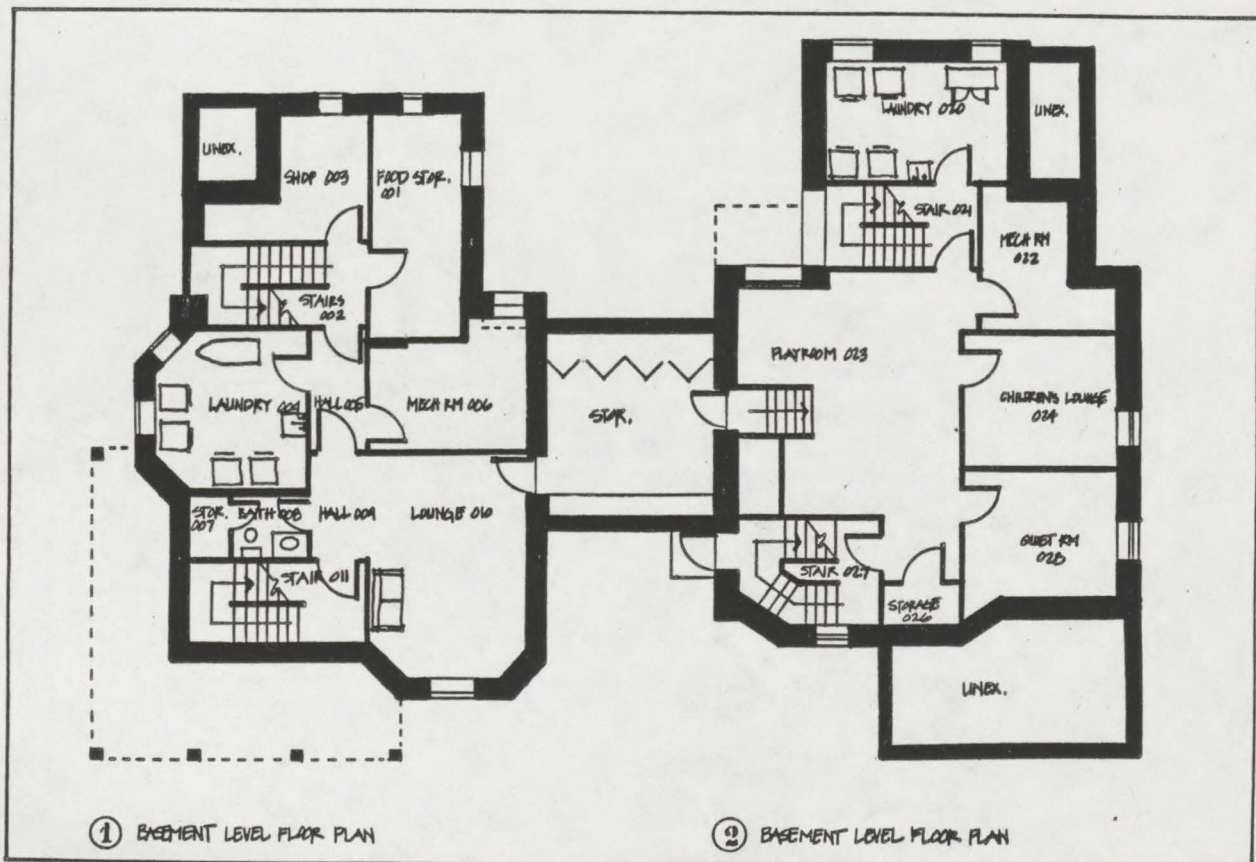
## Evaluation

The shelter functions smoothly. Despite the great distances necessitated by use of four levels, the central location of the most frequently-used rooms makes for a basically efficient design solution.

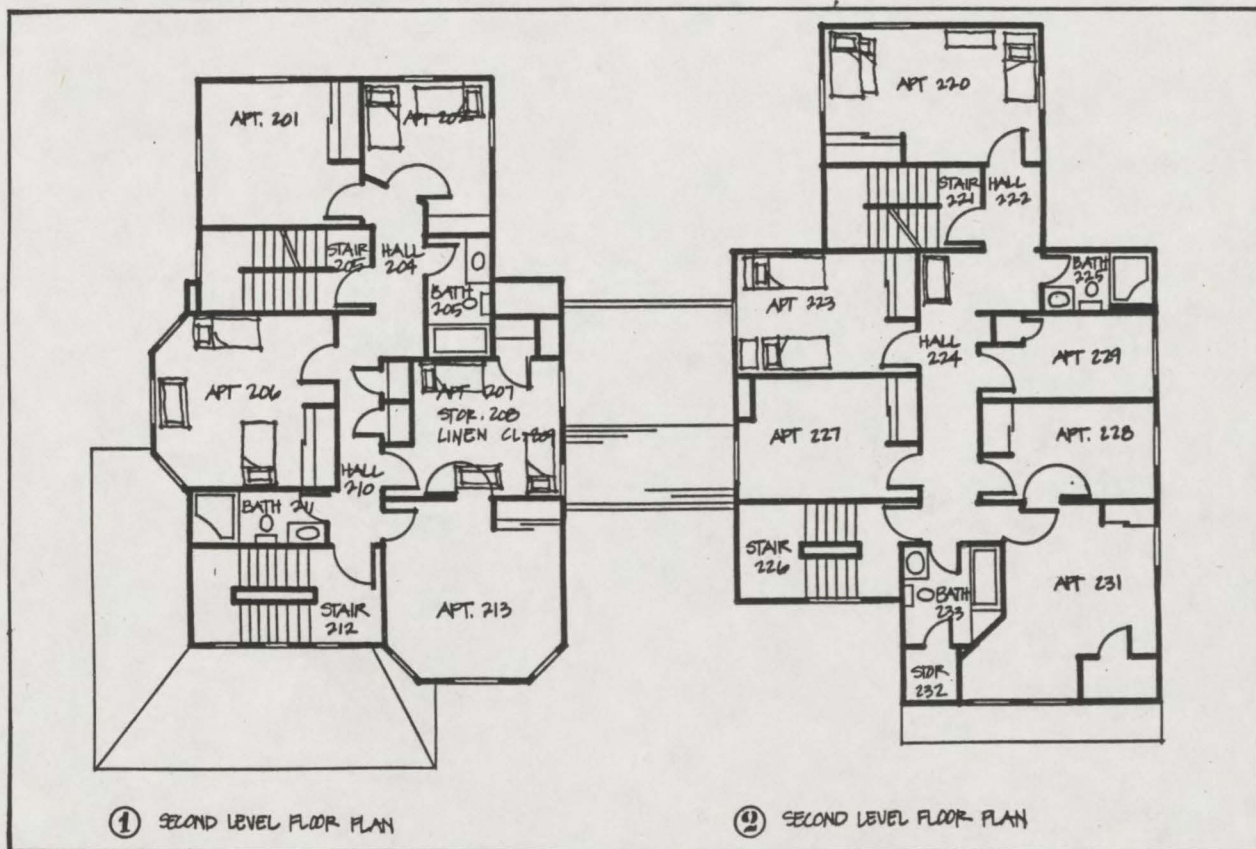
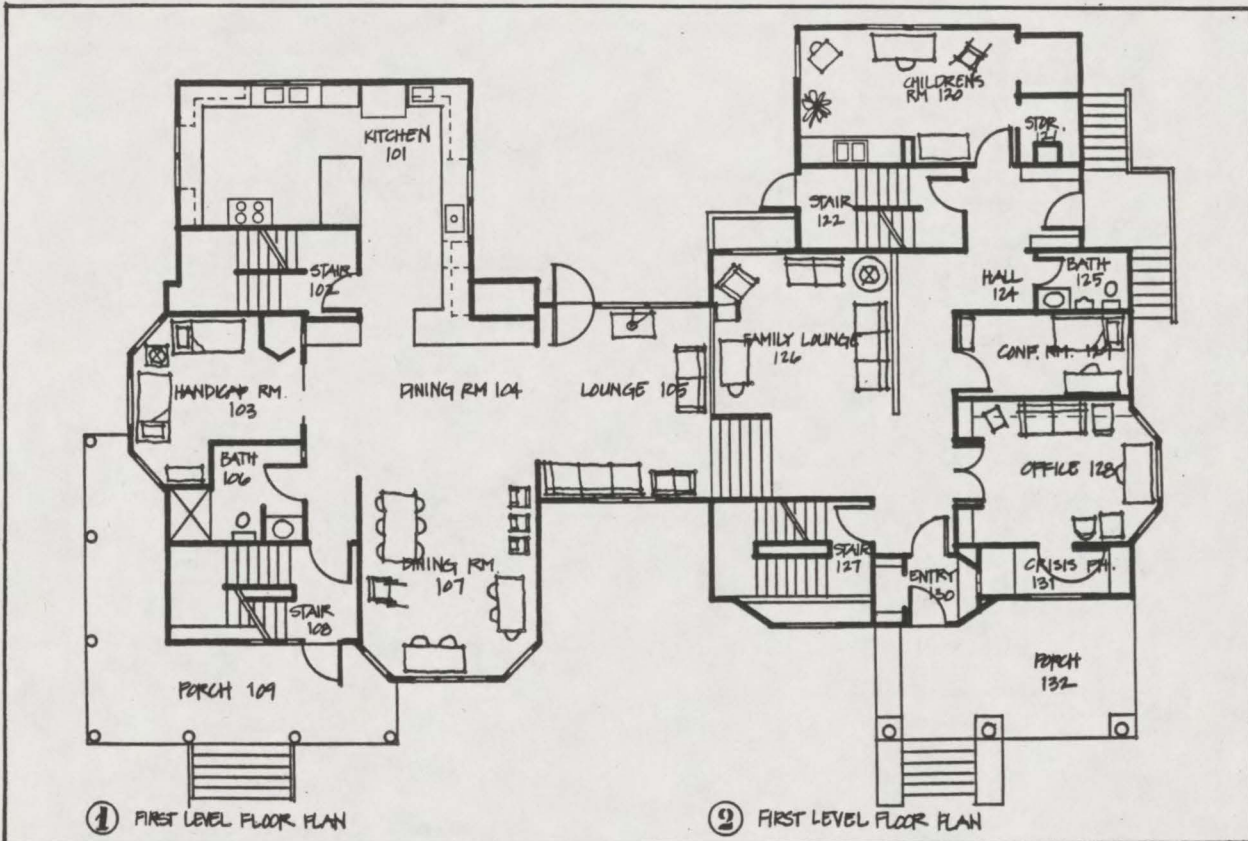
One qualification is a result of the Link design. The link between the two original buildings is one story in height. This has the advantage of reducing the apparent size of the residences from the street. But on the inside it has the effect of limiting access between the two buildings to one level, thus creating a funnel at the first floor for circulation across the residence. The present open design and furnishing of the first floor exposes the continuous movement across the building, thus inhibiting quiet activities. This problem could be minimized by placing furniture to break up the space.

The focus of activity is on the first floor. Some basement spaces have been designated as children's play areas. These do not function well because they are remote from the main floor.

## Floor Plans

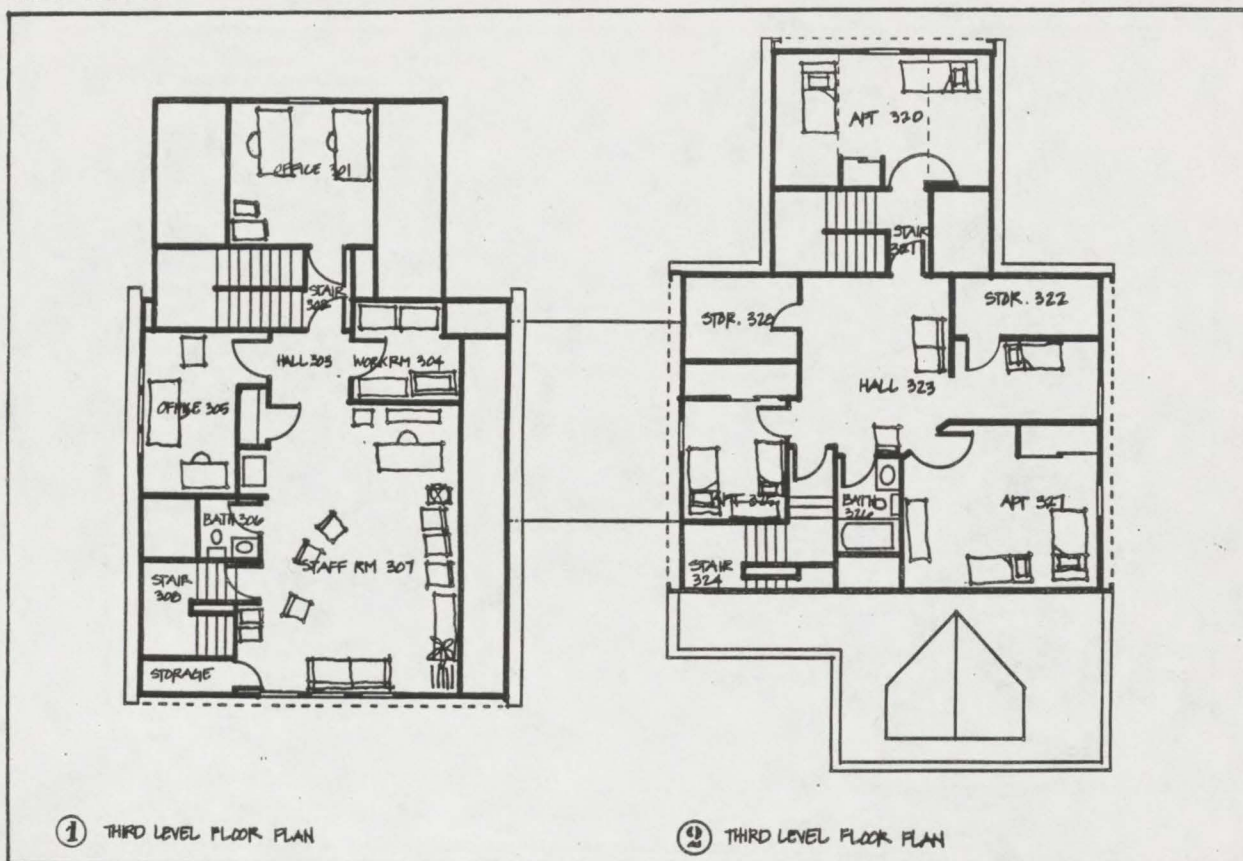


# Floor Plans





# Floor Plans



#### 4. COMMUNAL SPACES



The communal spaces are the areas where advocates, resident women and their children come together to participate in the activities of daily life. They were designed to support many types of interaction ranging from purposeful activities such as food preparation to unstructured activities such as children's play and conversation between the residents. These areas were seen as important in developing the group spirit vital to each resident's personal growth.

The primary location of the group spaces is on the first floor. Other areas are in the basement. The design of the group spaces was intended to permit many different types of activities to take place simultaneously. The first floor communal rooms (entry, upper lounge, Link, kitchen, dining room) were laid out to allow for children's play and for television watching to take place in the Link, while in the upper lounge, adults could supervise while removed from the ruckus. The upper lounge was placed near the entry to serve as a waiting area and a greeting space for new residents and visitors to the shelter. The kitchen was to be an adult place, but open enough to allow supervision of children in the adjacent dining room. The dining area was to accommodate not only daily eating, but also the informal daily meetings. The formal weekly meetings were to take place in the third floor meeting room. Basement play areas for children were included in the plans with the expectation that there would be supervisory staff in those areas during the daytime. Unfortunately, the staff positions never were funded.

In contrast to the small, dark areas on the first floor of the original houses, the new communal spaces are open and full of light. Overall, the design functions much as expected. The primary drawback is the lack of space for quiet conversation. Because of the openness of the plan, the Link and dining area contain a continuous high level of activity. This was accentuated during the study because furnishing was not yet complete. The upper lounge, while physically separate, is still acoustically part of the active area. No doubt this is exacerbated because the children are playing there instead of downstairs. With some changes in furniture arrangement and the addition of some materials to improve acoustics, this problem may be alleviated, thus allowing the first floor to accommodate the full range of activities originally planned for.

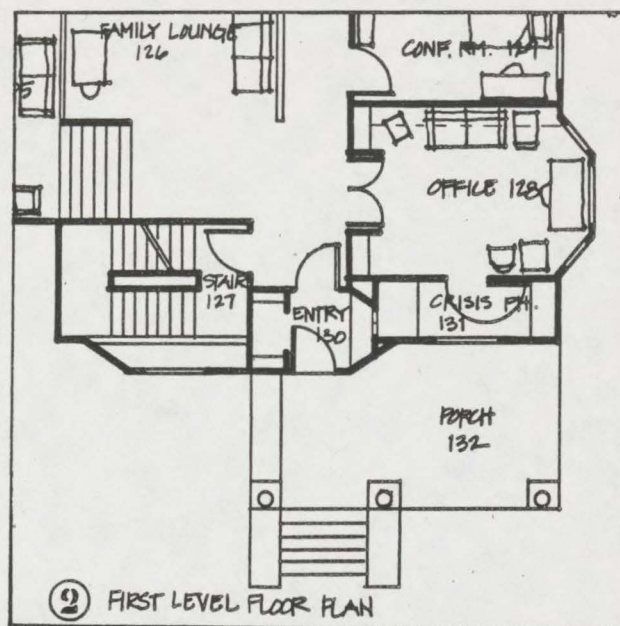


## ENTRY

### Comments

"It (the entry) seems awkward, such a confining area. There's no orientation for visitors." (Resident)

"The entry doesn't open up into anything but a view into the diaper pail and changing area (for the baby)." (Staff).



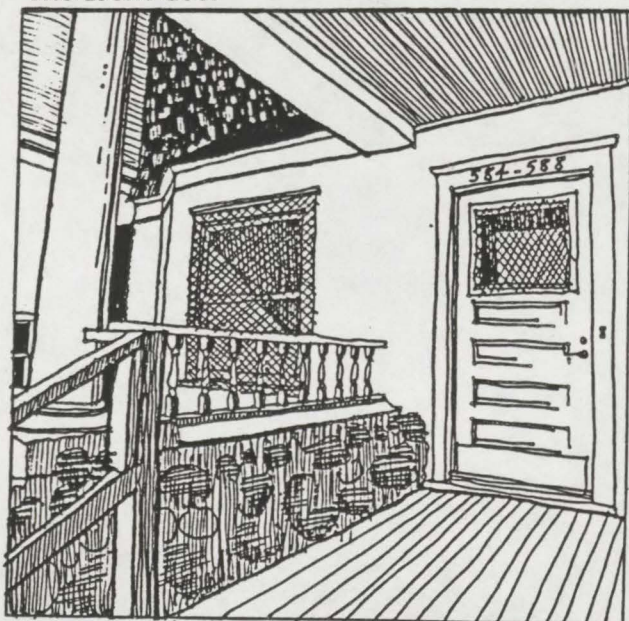
### Evaluation

The entry area should provide security and adequate space for women entering or leaving the shelter. The double door entrance to the shelter was created to provide extra security for the women. Because the front door doesn't close by itself, that intention has been subverted.

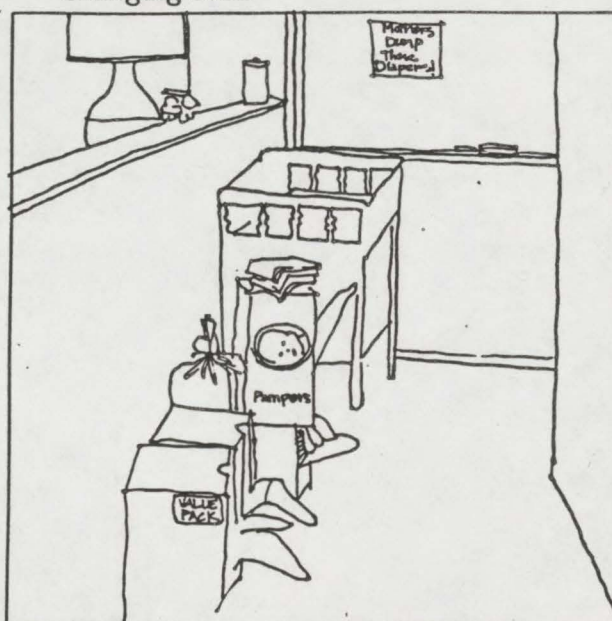
Since the vestibule space is so small, the various activities of dressing small infants, putting coats away, and just waiting for rides become quite cramped. The front entry doesn't have enough room for coat storage according to the staff, so the architects' intention of adequate closet space has not been met. The bench, however, is used for its intended purpose of dressing children.

Sitting on the bench in the vestibule, one can't see out the window because it is too high. Some residents end up waiting on the front porch steps which is against the shelter's house policy.

The front door



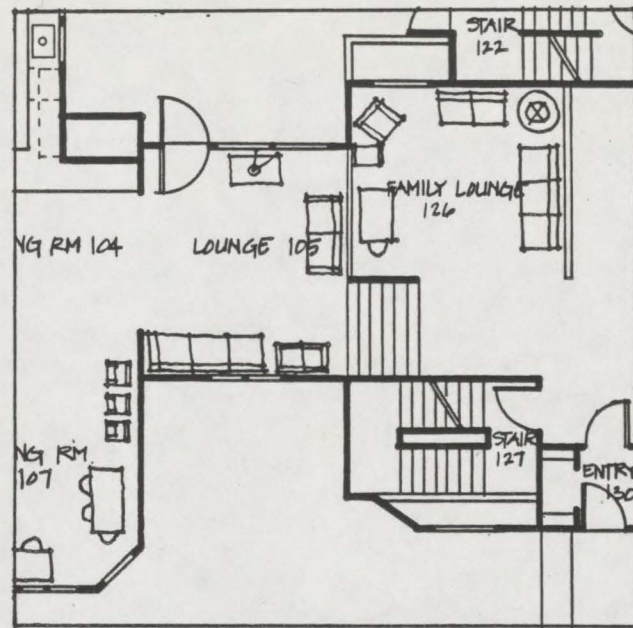
Entryway, view directly into diaper-changing area





LOWER LOUNGE/LINK

UPPER LOUNGE



### Comments

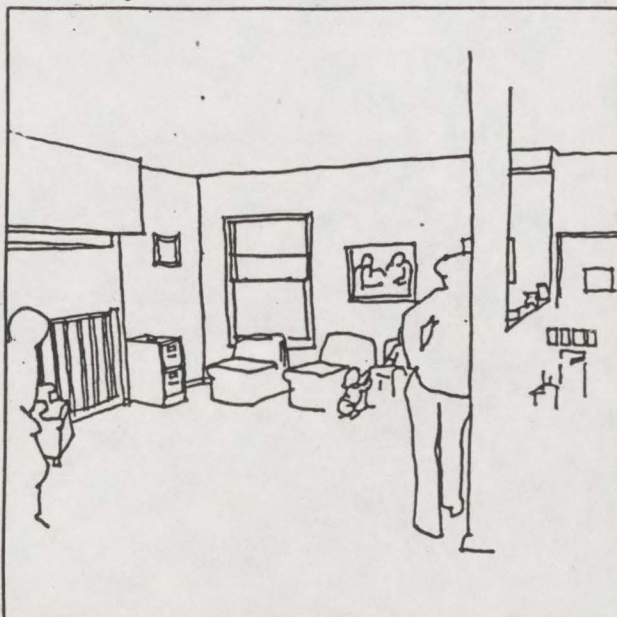
"I can watch T.V. and stand up to see my kids in the Link through the window."  
(Resident).

The T.V. should be in the upper lounge; in the Link it distracts from the dining area. The stereo is often on at the same time as the T.V. Kids are always playing while someone is trying to watch the set. "You can't sort of lounge there and watch kids. All the traffic is there. It's a crazy spot." (Resident).

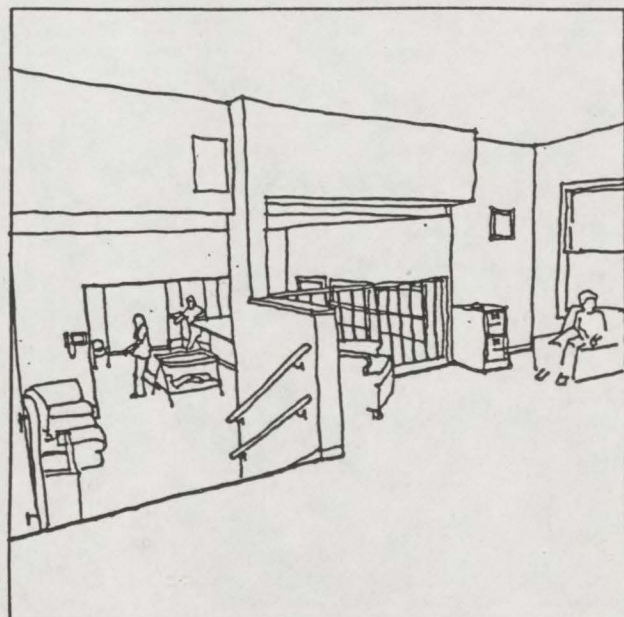
"The upper lounge would be much better as a working office with comfortable tables and chairs, a sink... (Staff).

"The stairs to the lower lounge cause congestion since all the kids play on them. They also pose a safety hazard. There's a heavy traffic pattern." (Observer).

The upper lounge, viewed from the entry



View of the upper lounge and the Link





## Evaluation

### UPPER LOUNGE

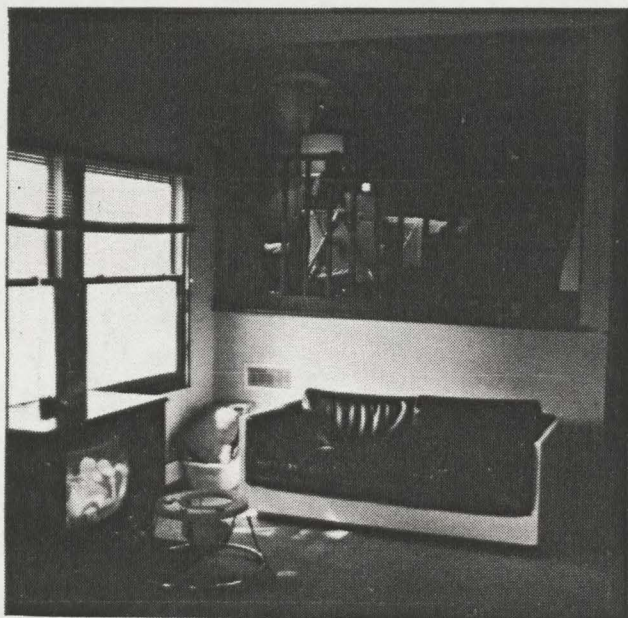
Few women use the upper lounge regularly. The space was envisioned as a strategic spot for adults who might wish to retreat from their children yet simultaneously observe them at play in the lower lounge. In fact, children invade the area and dangle their feet through the railing to the Link, damaging furniture and creating a ruckus.

The architects imagined that, given more room than just a T.V. area, the residents would find constructive alternatives to habitual T.V. watching. Although the lounge is half a grade above the T.V. area, the change in level is unsuccessful in muffling all the noise. Perhaps that is one of the reasons the lounge does not work as a retreat.

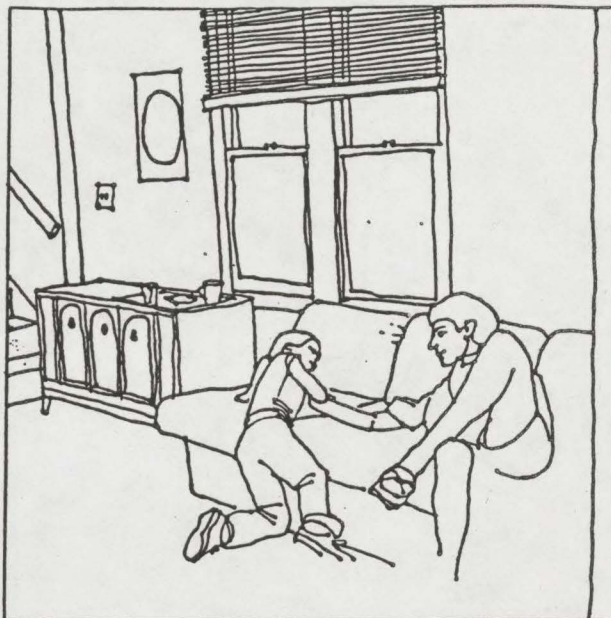
In the old building, the Advocates had so little room to do their work that the overcrowding caused constant tension. In an effort to alleviate some of that stress, the architects placed the open lounge adjacent to the program office. They hoped that some of the density could be lessened. Unfortunately, the Advocates' work still centers in their one, overtaxed program office. If some of the staff's duties could be relegated to the lounge, perhaps the pressures in the program office could be eased.

Yet why don't the residents use the lounge regularly? Does the T.V. noise disrupt their conversations, or does it attract them downstairs to the Link? Some residents are oblivious to the T.V., but they feel the lighting is inadequate for reading or writing. Low, adjustable lighting on some of the tables could increase the lounge's usefulness without disturbing its cozy ambience.

The Link and the upper lounge



The Link - armwrestling at the foot of the stairs





## Evaluation

### The Link

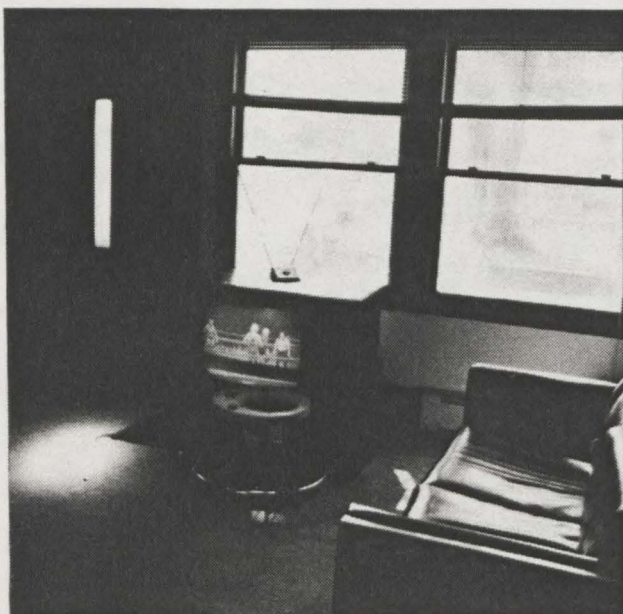
The Link was pictured by the designers as the active social center of the Women's Advocates shelter. Women could congregate, chat with other residents, let their children get comfortable with new people, and start to become part of a supportive community. But in its strength lies its weakness. So much conflicting commotion occurs that a sense of chaos often descends on the Link. Perpetual traffic through the area compounds the problem.

The architects wanted the Link to work smoothly on two axes, one as a transition between the two houses and the other as a connection from the inside of the shelter to the outside. The Link is at odds with itself. It functions better as a traffic path than it does as a room for activities. It is successful, however, as a visual tie to the outdoors. Mothers can see their children play outside as they sit within.

The staff says that for security reasons, the door from the Link to the backyard is supposed to remain locked. Of course, that hampers the children's ability to move in and out freely. Often the door remains unlocked. Sometimes children's fingers get caught in the door. Actually, since the backyard is secure, why couldn't the door remain open until the children are done playing for the day? Another possibility would be to have a lighter door so that the children could manage it by themselves. Another aspect of the door problem is that with it so often ajar, cold air seeps into the shelter, lowering the efficiency of the heating system. A vestibule might reduce some of the heat loss.

Overall, the Link might work better as an activity spot if the shelter's traffic did not move through its center. Instead, it could be rerouted off to one side. And although the hard floor surface is excellent for maintenance, it is less effective for acoustical control. More absorbent materials on the floor (rugs), on the walls (wall hangings), or on the furnishings (pillows) would alleviate the noisiness.

The Link - door to the play area

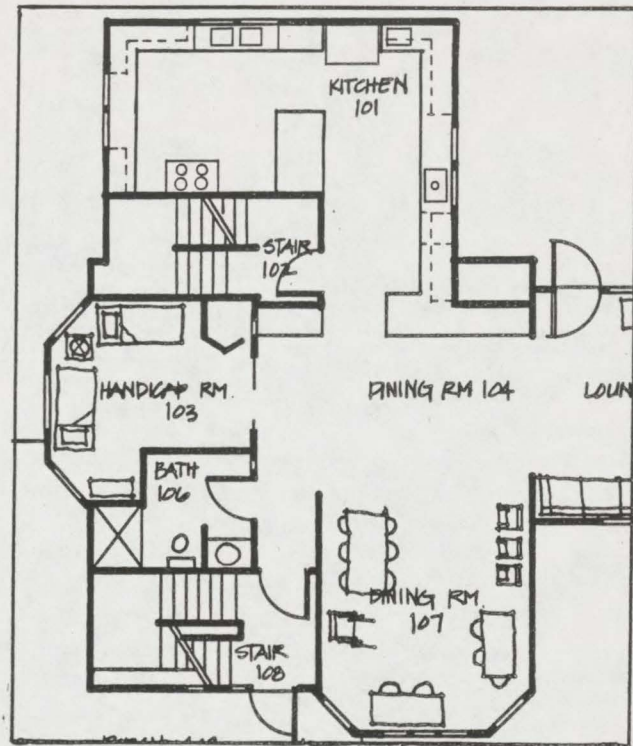


Family watching T.V. in the Link





KITCHEN  
DINING ROOM



Comments

KITCHEN

"The cooking works well. I like the big stove and oven." (Resident).

"It seems awkward. You have to do a lot of walking." (Resident).

"The kitchen and dining areas were my favorite spots. I used the dining room a lot. I liked to sit there and talk. I'd clean the kitchen when I was depressed." (Resident)

"I like the atmosphere, the feeling and the colors in the morning." (Staff).

"We need a freezer in the kitchen (the present one is in the basement), so you don't need a key for ice cubes or ice cream." (Staff).

"It's just too spread out...I'm not sure I like the 'L' shape. You have to walk too far. I don't like the way the stove is sitting all by itself." (Staff).

"Mothers cooking at the stove can't see children in the common space." (Observers)

"Snacks could perhaps be kept in a smaller refrigerator closer to the dining room. That way the children wouldn't need to go into the kitchen where they always open the big refrigerator." (Observer).

DINING ROOM

"It's a nice, big space." (Resident).

"The little tables and chairs are great for kids." (Resident)

"The ceiling lights are too institutional. They can't be modified." (Staff)

"The windows are low enough for the kids to see out." (Observer).



## Evaluation

### KITCHEN

The kitchen often acts as the heart of a house. In many private homes, the kitchen is the place for informal family meetings. In the old building, the kitchen functioned exactly that way. But the continual presence of women around the kitchen counter obstructed much of the work that had to go on for food preparation. For this reason, the new kitchen was designed to work primarily as a functional space. Socializing goes on in the dining room which was meant to be visually accessible.

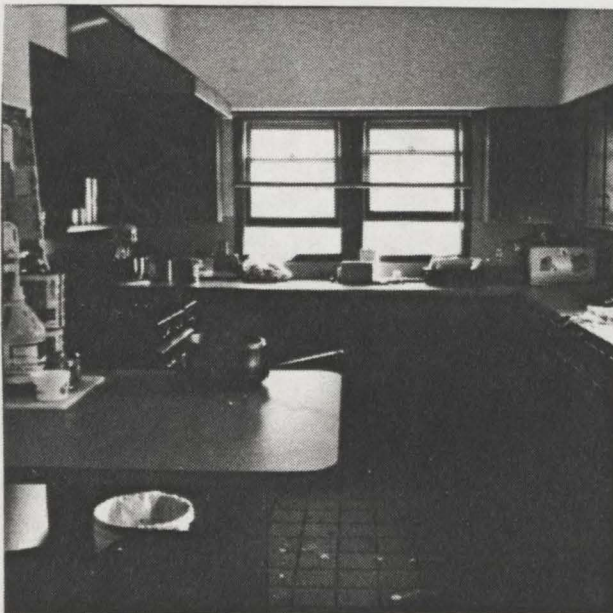
For the most part, the kitchen meets the practical needs of food preparation. For instance, in scale, in daily storage space, in the quantity of counter space, and in the size of appliances, the kitchen responds well to the residents' needs. The kitchen's layout, however, gives rise to several problems.

The zoning system of separate spaces for cooking, food preparation, and clean-up is not working as intended. The crux of the problem lies in the garbage disposal and dishwasher area. That spot was meant to focus the cleanup activities. Since the disposal doesn't work, a complicated circulation problem results. The women take their dirty dishes to the trash cans, then to the food preparation sink for rinsing and finally return them to the dishwasher for actual washing.

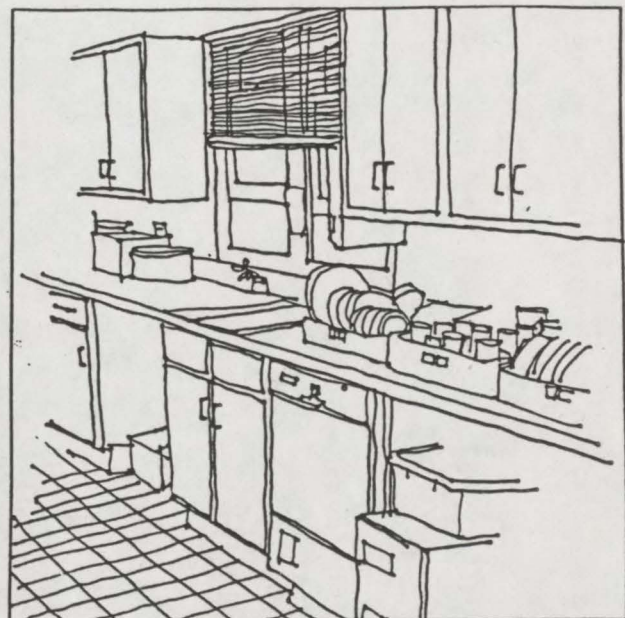
The kitchen is supposed to accommodate eight to ten women at once, but it can't because the peninsular counter creates a bottleneck in circulation. Given the kitchen's roominess, the varied chores should be done throughout the kitchen space. But most of the activity is centered in the back nook by the stove.

Modification of the kitchen to create one large space instead of two would permit active use of the whole kitchen. This could be done by replacing the peninsula with a counter against the wall.

The cooking area and peninsula



The washing-up area





## Evaluation

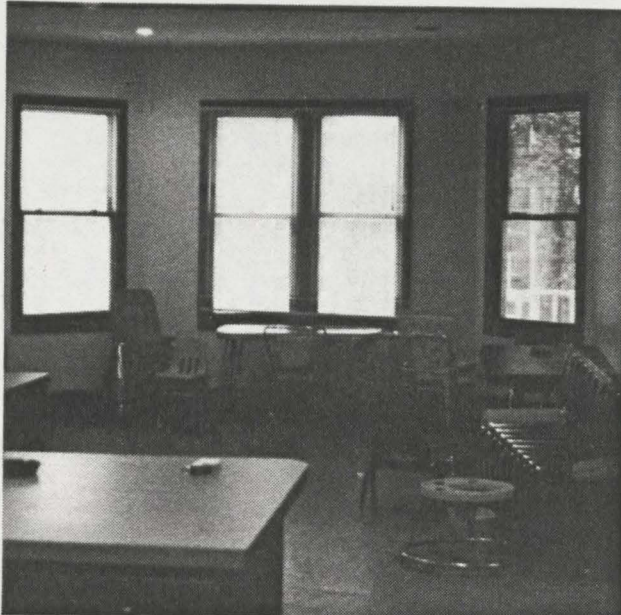
### DINING ROOM

The dining room was designed not only as space for eating or holding group meetings, but also as an informal gathering place. When observations were taking place, this room was not completely furnished. Eventually, with more furniture there, it should work more effectively as a multipurpose room.

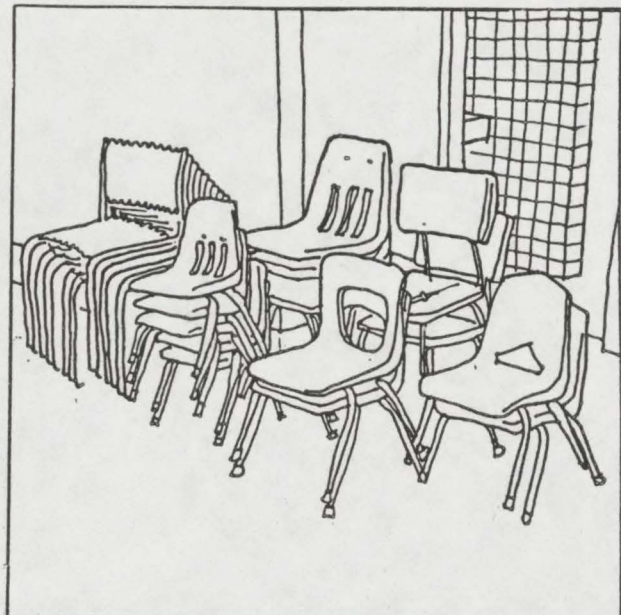
The dining room space is not well defined. The architects wanted the openness to allow free-flowing movement through the first floor and to counteract the gloominess of the dark, crowded old building. Unfortunately, so much of the dining room is taken up by circulation that it interrupts the sense of it being a distinct room. The bay window (at the north end of the room) does not create the homelike feeling the architects had expected because the room lacks focus. In a sense, it is too open-ended. The intended hominess is also undercut by the hard finishes and bland furniture. Instead of feeling warm, it seems cold and empty. The sterility of the room is accentuated when the tables and chairs are pushed aside and stacked for cleaning purposes. This happens frequently.

As a meeting room, the area suffers because there is only one large meeting table. Not everyone can fit around it at once. As an alternative, four rectangular tables could be used for family dining as well as in various combinations for house meetings. The use of warm colors, textures, and materials (such as wood) would make it a more inviting space. Durable artwork on the walls (fabric hangings) or posters mounted behind plastic would enliven the room. The lighting could be made more adaptable to various situations if a rheostat control were introduced. Of course, many of these suggestions would require additional funding.

The dining room viewed from the kitchen



Stacked dining room chairs are practical but institutional





## HANDICAP BEDROOM

### Comments

"The daylight is good; there are four windows." (Resident)

"The location is too public."

"It's too close to the dining room and all the late-night talking." (Resident)

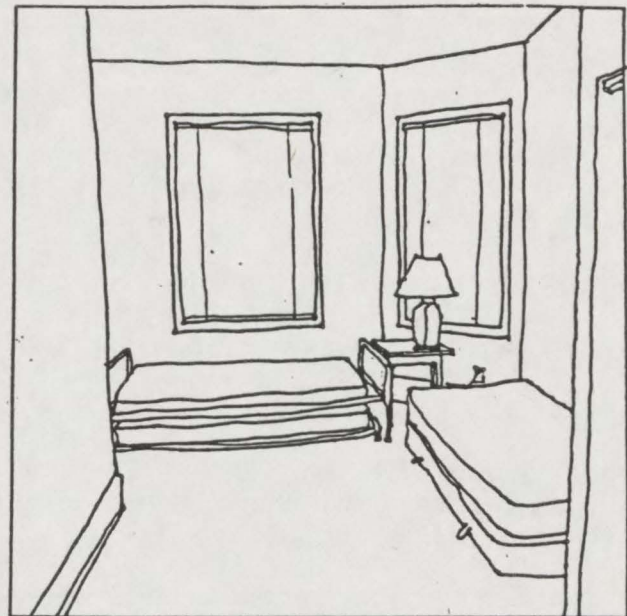
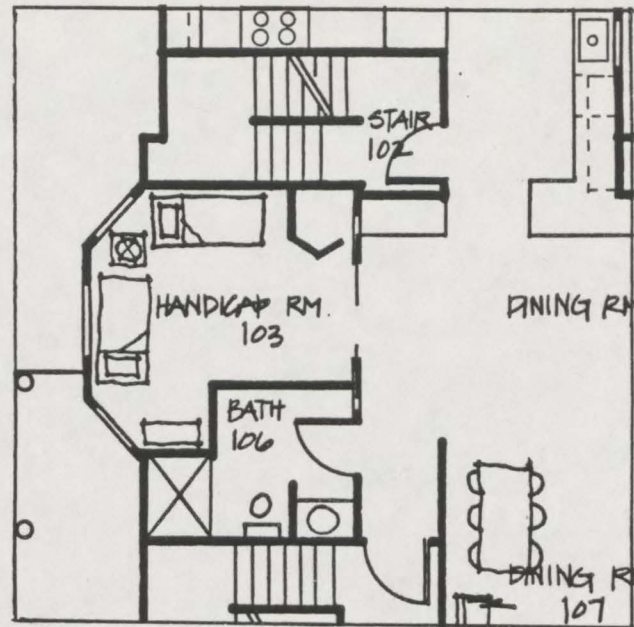
"I hate that first floor bedroom. I hate the way it's used... If a person wants to go to bed early--forget it; schedules conflict, sleeping and noise." (Staff)

### Evaluation

The handicap bedroom was included to satisfy city requirements for accessibility. The architects assumed that the handicap bedroom would be used infrequently because very few handicapped women every used this particular facility. (Handicapped women usually go to a shelter better prepared to handle their special needs.) Due to the constant need for additional housing, however, the staff has chosen to use that bedroom quite regularly for non-handicapped residents. What results are the problems of unsightliness for the shelter community and lack of privacy for the individual.

The proximity of the handicap bedroom to the dining room and lower lounge means that anyone occupying that room must always keep her door shut so that her bedroom will not be exposed to the community. Also, because of the frenetic activity right outside her door, a woman has a difficult time getting peace and quiet in her bedroom.

One idea for the bedroom has been to let it double as a lounge when not being used for handicapped residents. Up to now, the administrative decision has been not to use it as such. If it were furnished differently, it might serve well as a controlled play area where small children could be near their mothers, as a room for babies to sleep in accessible to the downstairs, or as a television lounge.

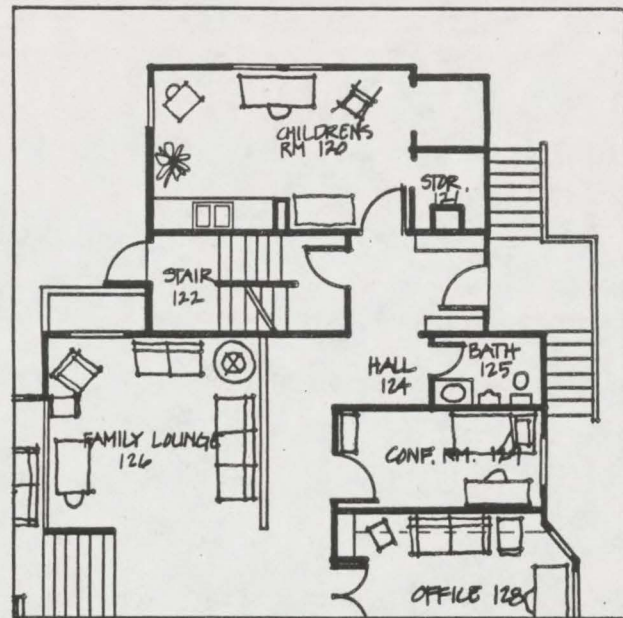




WEST ENTRY

(CHILDREN'S ENTRANCE)

CHILDREN'S BATHROOM

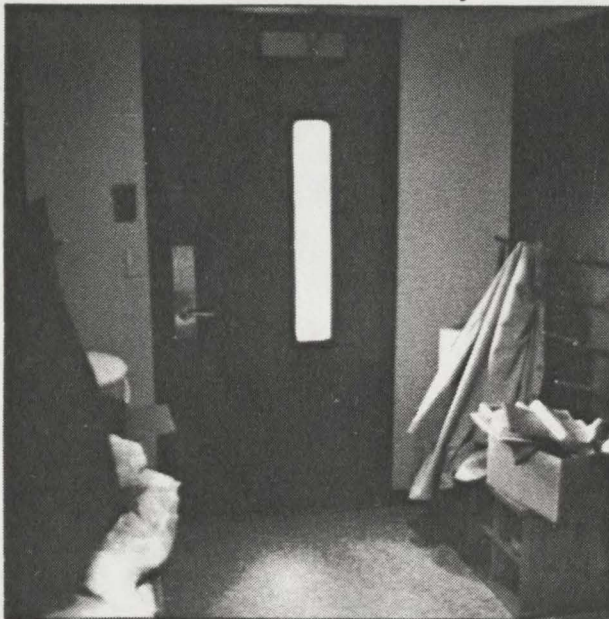


The west entry area was designed to keep the high level of activity associated with children's going outdoors separate from the other first floor activities. The door to the outside is adjacent to a coat storage area, to a toilet, to the child advocate area and to stairs which lead directly to the basement playroom. These rooms were clustered together to minimize the tracking of snow, sand and mud throughout the residence, and to keep the paraphernalia associated with dressing for the winter in a limited area.

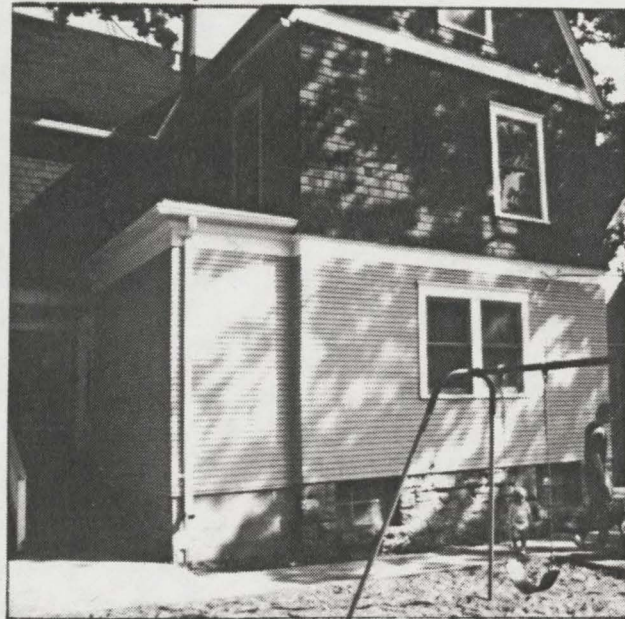
According to the advocates, in the winter this area works very well and children use it as intended. The coat storage serves well. The bathroom also works well except that the children don't know how to use the urinal and having a diaper changing area in the toilet would be preferable to having to use the hall bench.

During the summer, the need for segregation of this activity is less acute, and children prefer to go in and out at the Link, using the handicapped toilet. Thus the west entrance during our observation was largely unused. The convenience to both children and mothers of using the more direct route to the backyard through the Link door must be evaluated in terms of the disturbance it causes to activities taking place in the Link area. The constant disruption indicates a need for change. In the winter when coats must be put on, the use of the west entry is a natural part of the exiting sequence. In the summer, a reason for using that entrance needs to be found. Perhaps denying use of the handicapped toilet to children would encourage use of the west entrance.

Children's coat area at west entry



West entry from the outside





## BASEMENT ROOMS

### Comments

#### LAUNDRY ROOMS

"The laundry rooms are convenient if you don't mind carrying lots of laundry up and down lots of stairs." (Resident).

#### LOUNGE

"We have dibs on it for an adolescent T.V. lounge. The women should be closer to the Advocates, not alone and depressed in the basement (watching soaps, laying on the couch, drinking beer...)." (Staff).

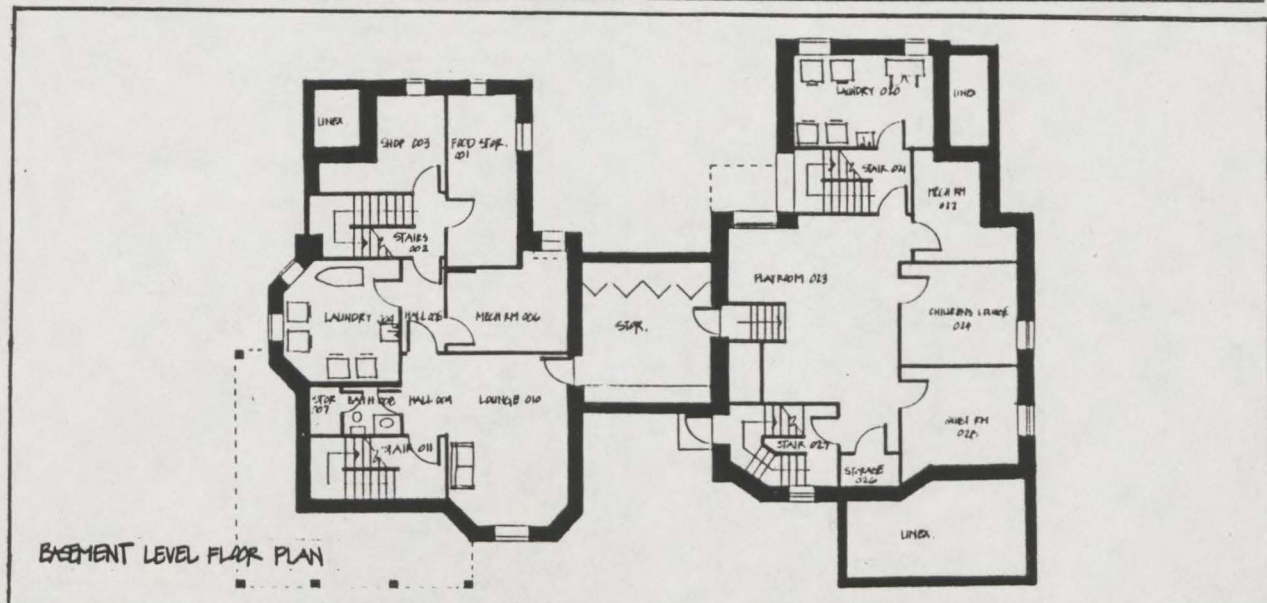
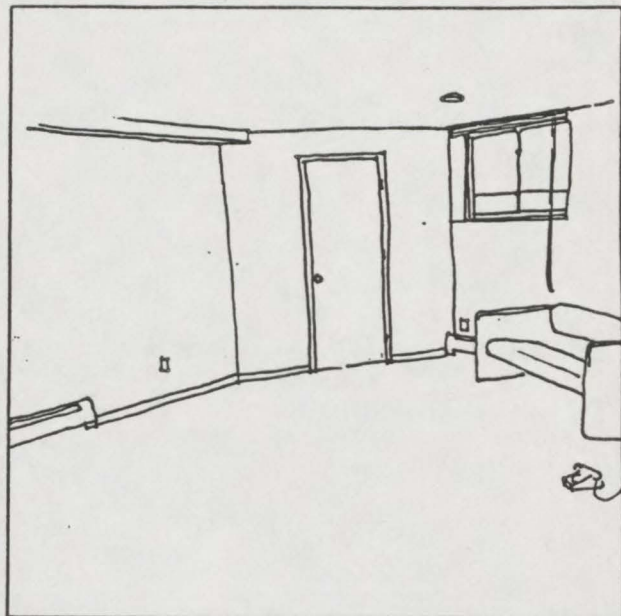
#### PLAYROOM

"The children can almost never be unsupervised. There are too many families from different backgrounds. There are child conflicts. They're angry and sometimes violent. They have to have managed play." (Staff).

Laundry room



Basement lounge





## Evaluation

### LAUNDRY ROOMS

The two laundry rooms include a good number of machines, are spacious, and are well ventilated. Their locations in the basement are traditional but certainly a great distance from the main source of laundry, the bedrooms. The laundry in the east wing of the house is not near any play area, making it difficult for mothers to keep an eye on children while doing their laundry. The rooms are not pleasant places to be for folding and ironing. The addition of color and soft wall hangings would help.

It would be ideal if a new laundry space could be built as a first floor addition. This would reduce the number of steps for carrying loads of laundry and make child-supervision easier.

### LOUNGE

Because of a lack of funds, the lounge hasn't to this date been used as it was designed, as an adolescent space. But it is in the process of transformation. Carpeting has been laid. A game table will soon be placed there, and the staff plans to move a T.V. there, too.

Traffic flow does not cut into the space which means it should be an appropriate place to escape. Once again, the addition of warm-toned furniture would help make this an attractive area.

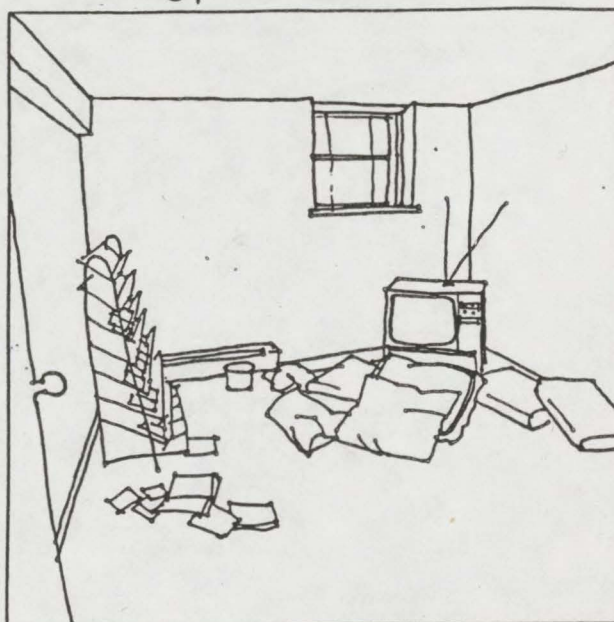
### PLAYROOM

The downstairs playroom was planned for supervised childcare to take place. Since the design of the new building, the anticipated additional child care personnel has not materialized. The space is so far removed from the main adult activity area, supervision is difficult, so the space is rarely used. The architects had originally hoped that activities involving greater motion and larger toys would occur in the basement rather than in the smaller and quieter Child Advocates' office. This hope has not been realized. In fact, much of this activity now occurs in the Link.

Playroom, sheet over window,  
missing handrail



Quiet room, occasionally used for  
watching T.V.



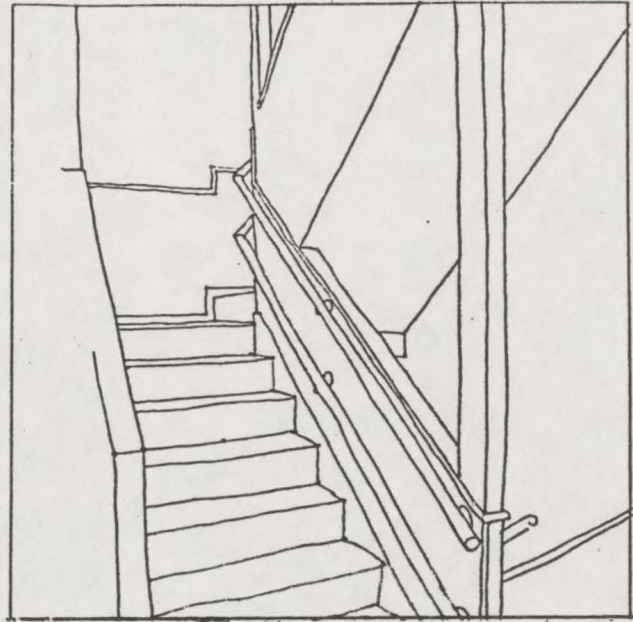


## STAIRS

### Comments

"The kids can't open the door by themselves; they can't get downstairs. Also, they are always bumping their heads on the sharp corners of the handrail." (Resident).

"I still get confused. It takes a long time to find your way around (because the stairs look so much alike)." (Resident).

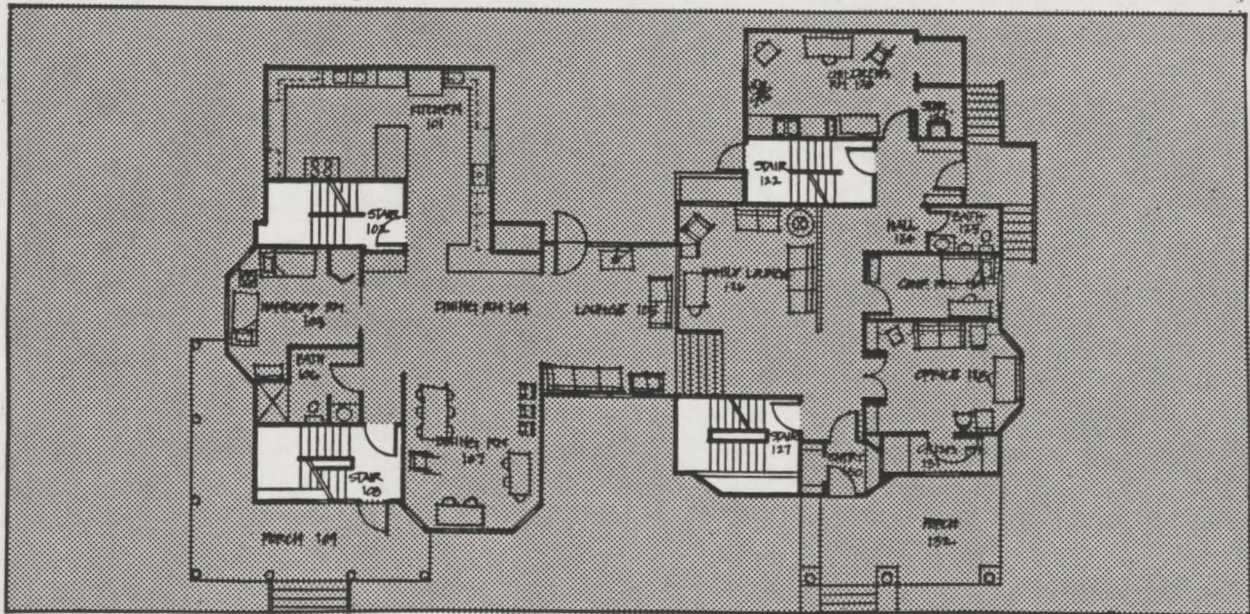


### Evaluation

Fire code restrictions have dictated the design and location of the four major staircases in the shelter. They are unlike typical house stairs because they are totally enclosed. The stairs' carpeting alleviates some of their institutional quality. The wainscoting has prevented damage to the walls, but a handful of complaints persist. The kitchen stairs are not wide enough for a woman carrying a load of laundry while trying to keep her kids in tow. Most of the staircases lack sufficient natural light which is offset by the use of institutional, fluorescent lights left on most of the day.

A good number of residents spoke of a basic confusion as to which staircase was which. The felt disoriented by the sameness of the design. Confusion could be eased by differentiation with color and graphics. Difficulties for children arise because of the heavy fire doors which they can not open easily by themselves and because of the sharp corners on the handrails. The presence of child-height windows on the doors, however, reduces the danger of an adult pushing a door open onto a child. And the double handrails are excellent for children.

Plan of first floor showing stairwells





## 5. RESIDENT SPACES



The Women's Advocates shelter is a place where women and their children can live while they are straightening out their lives. They have left the familiar surroundings of their home and are seeking refuge and security. In their minds, the quality of the accommodations is secondary to the fact that they can be housed in a protective environment. During the time that they live in the shelter, they are adjusting to great changes in their lives and often are seeking new permanent housing. This may take anywhere from several days to a month or more. For a short-term resident, the shelter is merely a place to spend a few nights. For a resident who stays longer, the shelter must serve as a temporary home. In this latter situation, which is typical for a larger family, the living area must allow enough privacy for them to function as a distinct unit but also allow them to be a part of the larger shelter community.

The bedroom and bathroom spaces assigned to each resident are designed to be cheerful, durable and practical. The rooms were supposed to accommodate a range of family sizes. The spaces achieve these ends well. Refinement of these spaces to allow for creation of a homelike atmosphere on the part of each resident is still needed. Furnishing is the primary issue; recommendations are made in the following discussion of the types of spaces.

The relationships between the resident spaces, however, do not take full advantage of the potential for interaction between the inhabitants. The second floor was designed to maximize the number of bedrooms, so no social space within the corridors was provided. On the third floor an area has been provided, but is used only by the residents of that level. Ideally, informal conversation would take place in the bedrooms. Yet because of the restriction on smoking, the bedrooms do not function in this way. Provision of smoking areas related to each room grouping might encourage such smaller group interaction.



## BEDROOM/APARTMENTS

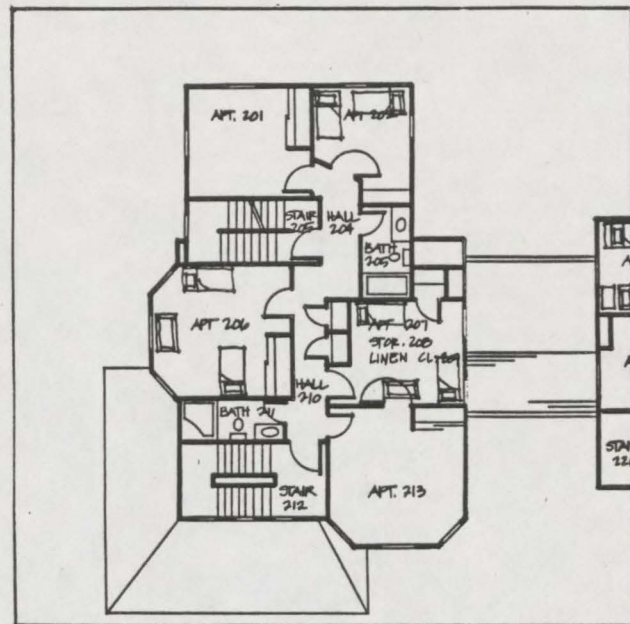
### Comments

"That's where I keep a lot of personal things. It's my own house. I can leave things and not worry about them."  
(Resident)

"You're always short of spaces to sit."

"Just sleeping. I didn't want to read because I couldn't smoke there."  
(Resident)

Not enough storage. Outlets don't work well for reading (repeated). Would have liked a lamp for reading. Hard not to smoke in bedrooms. (Residents)



### Evaluation

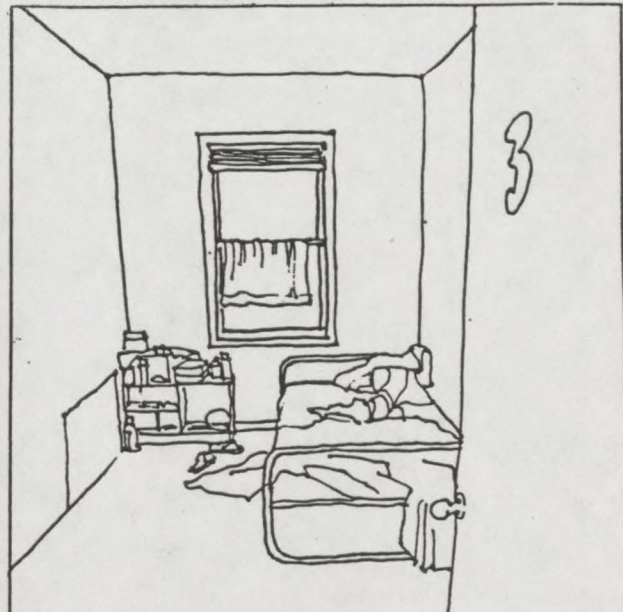
The bedrooms function well in terms of the space allocated to each family. The bedrooms were intended as spaces for individual or family retreat, in other words, as a home base. A family is given one or two bedrooms to call its territory. The resident needs to be able to personalize the space easily with her own possessions so that she feels that it is her own area. Yet personalization and privacy, of such paramount importance, are the hardest to achieve. To help each woman make her room her own, she could be given bulletin boards, reading lamps, and more shelving for storage and display of personal items. This is especially important for those families who stay up to one month.

A woman can gain privacy by shutting her door, but it can make her feel isolated because it is not a personalized space. If it were, she might enjoy being alone there. As it is, she can feel quite alienated. For some residents, the rules which prohibit smoking in the bedroom would mean that this cannot be their comfortable retreat. Realistically, of course, the danger of fire cannot be ignored. Consideration might be given to providing a special space for smokers. Nonsmokers, on the other hand, seek a quiet place free of smoke. Ideally, bedroom assignments could separate smokers and nonsmokers in different parts of the residence. This seems an unlikely solution, however, since most of the women in crisis smoke heavily.

Room for a resident with a baby



Personalization is minimal

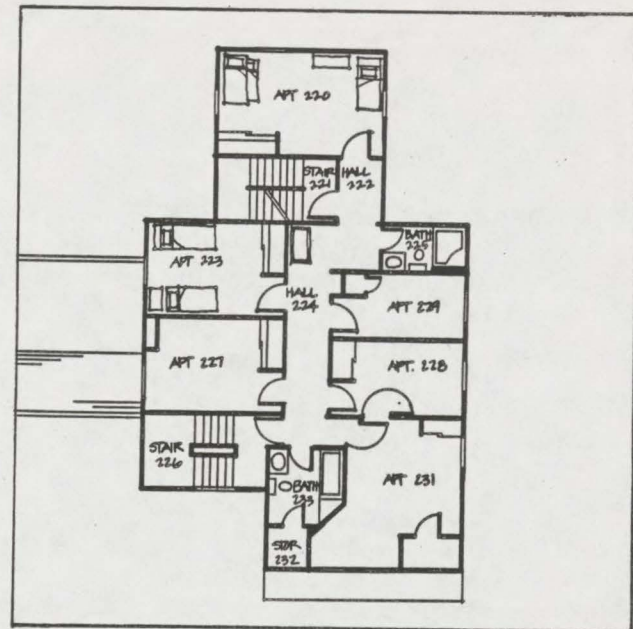




## BATHROOMS

## CORRIDORS

Plan of the second floor  
west wing



## Comments

### BATHROOMS

- not big enough for potty seats and diaper pails
- specifically designed tubs work well. "They work very well. It's difficult to reach kids in the corner, but I like the big tubs, the 'kiddie pools.'" (Residents)
- "I couldn't get the medicine cabinet open. There's no place to store stuff without kids getting into it." (Resident)
- need larger counter space for changing diapers. (Staff)

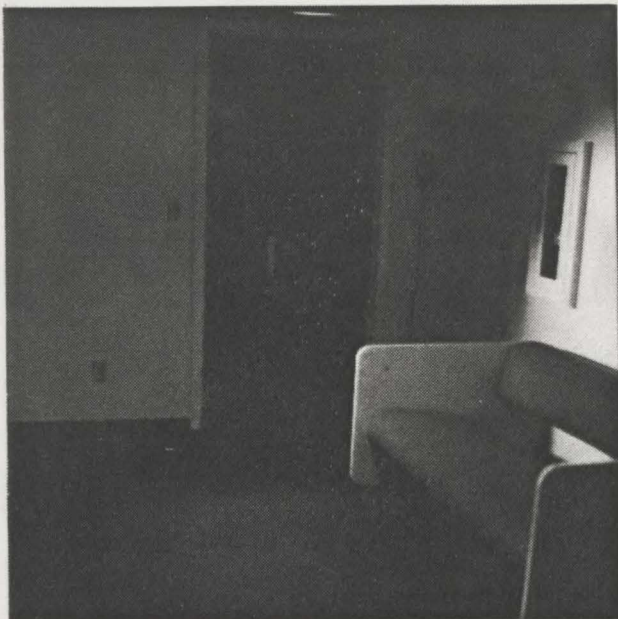
### CORRIDORS

- too narrow (Residents)
- not enough light (Residents)
- stuffy and claustrophobic (Residents)
- "The corridor is a long narrow hallway with doors shut with numbers on them. It looks like a hotel." (Staff)
- "When all the bedroom doors are closed, there's no daylight." (Staff)

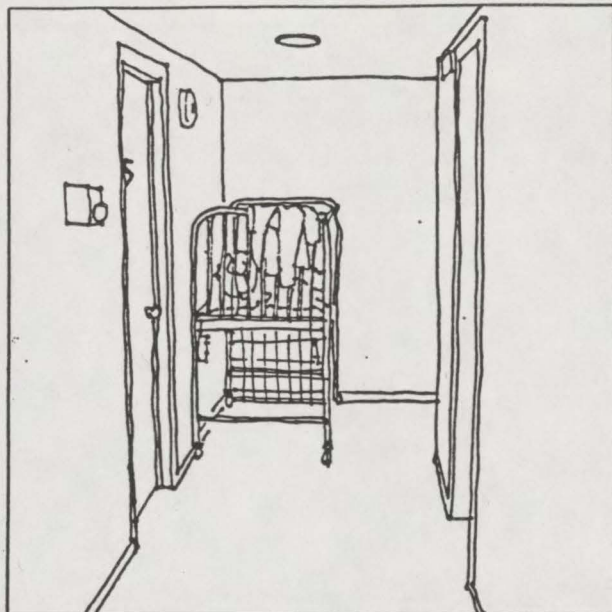
Bathrooms are high-use areas







Third floor lounge is isolated from most residents



Crib storage in dark narrow hallway

### Evaluation

#### BATHROOMS

Bathrooms are heavily used at certain times of the day. Thus, high priority was placed on having a large number of them. The number and quality of the bathrooms are a huge improvement over what they had in the old building. The residents' criticisms deal with the lack of adequate personal storage space.

Two opposite approaches might help solve the problem. Either additional storage could be given to each residents' room, or the bathrooms could be modified to accommodate more women at once. In the first instance, a mirror and a shelf for personal items might be installed in each bedroom, thereby lightening the congestion in the bathrooms. Each woman could put on her make-up in her room. The second alternative would be to have two doors within each bathroom and more than one sink which would allow more people to use the bathroom at critical times. If expansion of the bathrooms is decided upon, more counter space, more hooks for clothes, and the use of double toilet paper dispensers would be desirable.

#### CORRIDORS

Corridors are places where people's paths cross as they go from one place to another, often serving as junctures for social interaction. To encourage social activity, the hall must be well lit and wide enough to permit two people to have a conversation while a third person passes by. Ideally, adjacent to a corridor would be a seating area to allow further discussion.

The corridors here are dark and narrow. The architects felt they had to sacrifice the hallways in favor of a greater number of bedroom units, not only to house more women but also to increase funding potential. But the corridors have a significant function for women learning to trust each other in the new, unfamiliar shelter. Those haphazard moments of support should not be underestimated. Perhaps a couple of walls could be torn down from an end bedroom and then be converted into a small family lounge. The light from the room would then brighten the corridor. The room itself could provide a focus and an alternative to full group contact or isolation within individual bedrooms. It could also serve as a study room or if within code restrictions, a smoking area, since the bedrooms cannot be used for that purpose. On the third floor such a space is provided, although it has not functioned in that way due to lack of furniture.



## TELEPHONES



Residents' pay telephone (in stair 127)

### Comments

"A comfortable, private area out of the way of traffic would be perfect." (Resident)

"There aren't enough phones for us." (Resident)

"A place to sit, drink coffee, write messages and smoke while you talk would be great." (Resident)

"A room behind the office or a corridor near the bedrooms might be better than where the telephone is now." (Resident)

"At the very least, they could put another phone for the residents in the staircase by the dining room." (Observer)

### Evaluation

The telephone is an important link to the outside world. At the same time, it is a potential source of harassment of residents by husbands or partners. The center has chosen to deal with this potential problem by restricting the use of the shelter's telephones to business calls, and by providing a pay telephone for residents' social calls. While the center's telephone number is published, the residents' number is not. Residents are free to give out this number or keep it private.

In the planning of the facility, however, the residents' telephone was not taken into account. The architects were not asked to include it; the staff expected to install it in a suitable location once the shelter was finished. This decision has resulted in a situation where there is not enough privacy for a woman who needs to use the phone for personal calls. The pay telephone is located in the staircase near the front door. The open design of the stairs means that sound travels easily up all the flights. Someone on the third floor level can hear anything a woman on the first floor level is saying in a normal tone of voice. In addition, the person on the telephone is visible from the front entry.

There needs to be more than one telephone for residents. And these should be placed where a door can be installed, which when shut, will assure the privacy of the phone caller. A roomy telephone booth is one possible solution.



## 6. ADVOCATE SPACES



The Women's Advocate shelter functions as a collective; many tasks are rotated among advocates at all levels of responsibility. Nonetheless, each individual has specific jobs which need to be accomplished. Each staff member is given a space of her own, either at a desk or in an office. The advocates are in two primary divisions of labor: those who are engaged in daily interaction with the residents and those who are responsible for long term planning and administration. The first group is housed on the first floor in the west half of the building. The second group is located in the somewhat remote third floor office area.

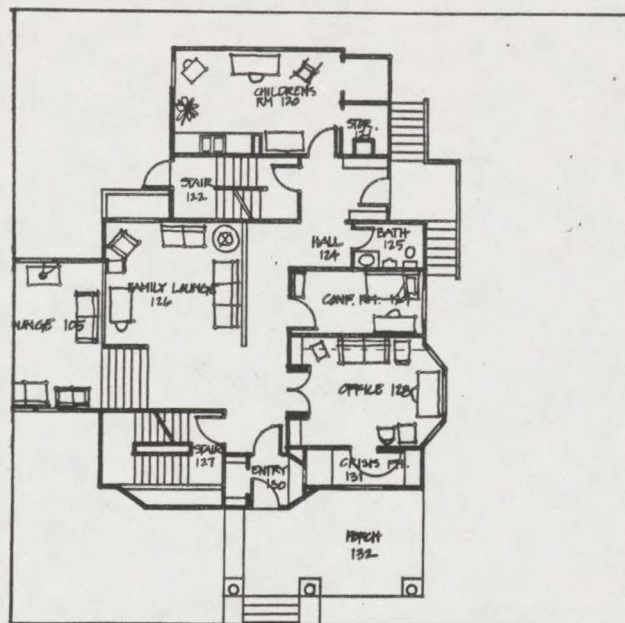
The advocates who are housed on the first floor have as their first responsibility, being accessible to residents. They need to be visible and available. The location of their offices serves this purpose well. The advocates need to be able to engage in private conversation with individual women or children. They also must make telephone calls and do other work without interruption. These activities do not work as well.

The third floor advocates are engaged in activities which are essentially individual. Their offices are too small, but otherwise work well. Adjacent to the offices are other work spaces and a meeting space. The architects and advocates underestimated the amount of space that would be needed for administrative work. At present, the third floor meeting area is being used both for work and for meetings. These two usages cause a conflict which seeks resolution.

The renovation has given the advocates pleasant spaces to work in. The recommended adjustments should increase the smoothness of their functioning.



WOMEN'S ADVOCATES OFFICE  
 CHILD ADVOCATES OFFICE/  
 CHILDREN'S ROOM  
 CONFERENCE/INTAKE ROOM



WOMEN'S ADVOCATES OFFICE

Comments

"There are so many people who use the office that it should be bigger... In fact, all that use makes for too many interruptions; it's too hectic for privacy. That door being shut doesn't matter to anyone...It's difficult carrying on confidential conversations. When several people are talking in there, you get too many overlapping conversations (and can't hear yourself think)." (Resident)

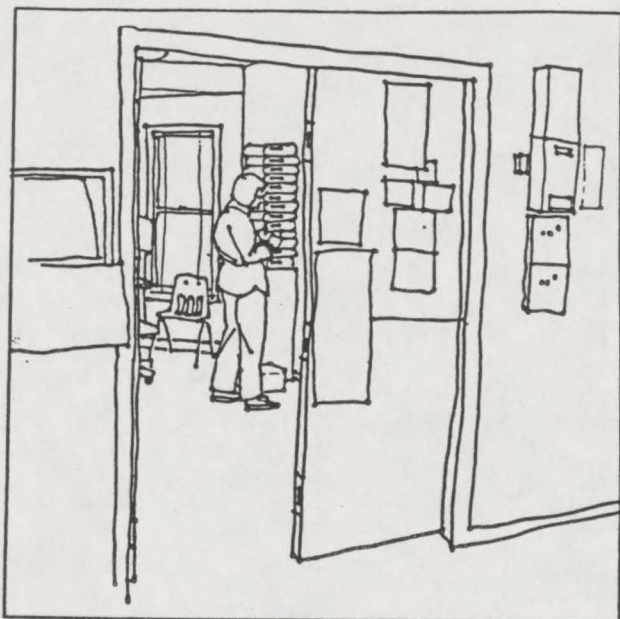
"The staff should be more accessible to the residents, but they're not. They're just stuck in that office." (Staff)

"We need to separate out the various functions from the staff office. Everything is all in one room." (Staff)

"We need a controlled, protected area for the kids (babies) while the moms do their work in the office." (Staff)

"The window placement is very successful in creating a comfortable spot for conversation for two to three people. The bay window, the desk, and the chairs compose an alcove." (Observer)





Women's Advocates office - double dutch doors



Crisis phone room - glass block window to vestibule

### Evaluation

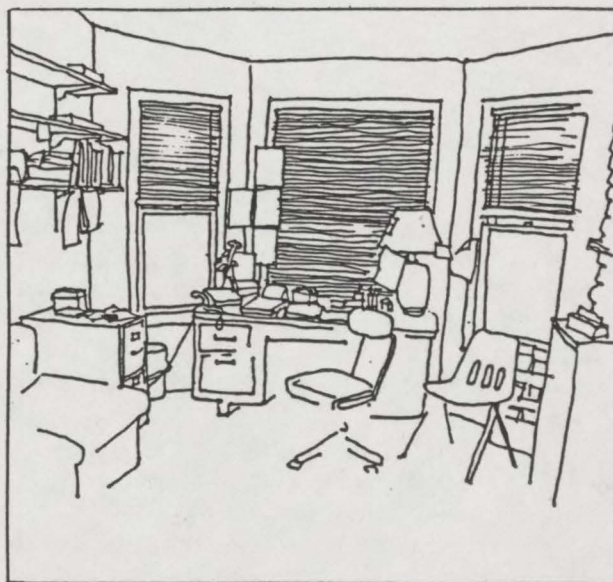
Many diverse activities take place in the Womens' Advocates office including: shift change meetings, intake of new residents, dispensing medicine, linens and keys, answering the crisis phones, advocacy, and distribution of cleaning supplies.

The office needs to be open to residents. But not only must the room convey a welcome, it must also be easy to approach physically. An accessible location is vital. At the same time, the advocates need sufficient space for that work which requires greater concentration and quiet. These sometimes conflicting requirements have not been completely resolved.

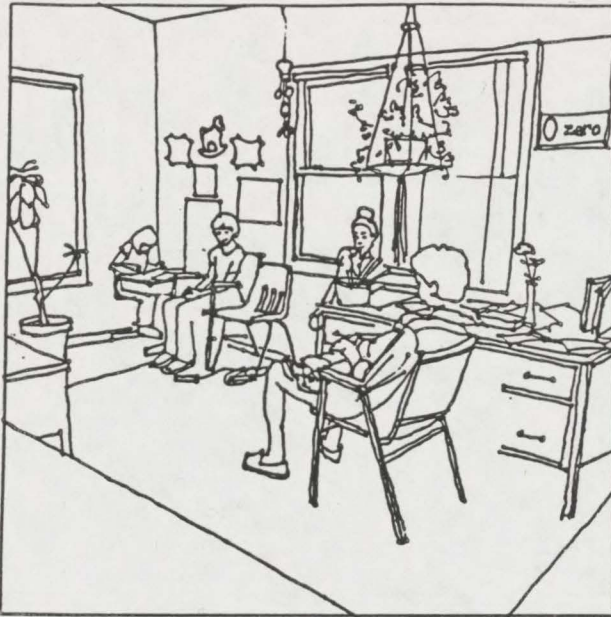
The double Dutch doors are the key to the fundamental problems in this office. Their original purpose was to increase the connection with the upper lounge. The architects thought the doors would keep the children out but allow visual access to the outer lounges. As it has turned out, the Advocates keep the doors closed a lot of the time because there is too much conflicting activity going on and not enough privacy to accomplish their work.

Some of the many functions handled in that one office might be reassigned to other places. Maybe a volunteer could staff a supply area and leave the office for advocacy and the crisis phone work. The door could be relocated and the side closets eliminated to make more room for desks and writing surfaces.

Women's Advocates Office - alcove







The child advocates office is used for quiet play



The intake/conference room is used for storage and staff sleeping

## CHILD ADVOCATES OFFICE

### Comments

"More seating, child-level countertops, more locked cupboard space, and comfortable furniture would improve the room's functioning." (Staff)

"It's a nice office which functions well. It's comfortable and roomy. They even have toys for the children while the moms talk to the advocate." (Resident)

### Evaluation

Because the child advocates' office is not in the mainstream of traffic that centers in the entryway, the upper lounge, and the program office, it is a prime spot for quieter children's activities. Here, child advocates can meet with mothers and children in undisturbed conferences. At other moments, children participate in a program of low-key play: drawing, painting, and often times cooking. The room works rather well for its intended uses.

## INTAKE/CONFERENCE ROOM

### Evaluation

Although this room is referred to as both the conference room and the intake room, neither conferring nor intake occurs here on a regular basis. As the architects intended, it is often used as a place for night staff to sleep. Since it works well as a bedroom, it is less suitable as a place for introducing new women to the shelter. Still, many of the advocates choose to sleep on the sofa bed in the main office instead of staying in the intake room overnight, so that they can be closer to the entrance, reference information, and petty cash.

The room is continually used for storage. New uses should be considered for this room:

- taking storage out of the program 'office and making the intake room a separately staffed storeroom
- making it a resident phone room
- turning it into a soft room for babies while mothers work with advocates.



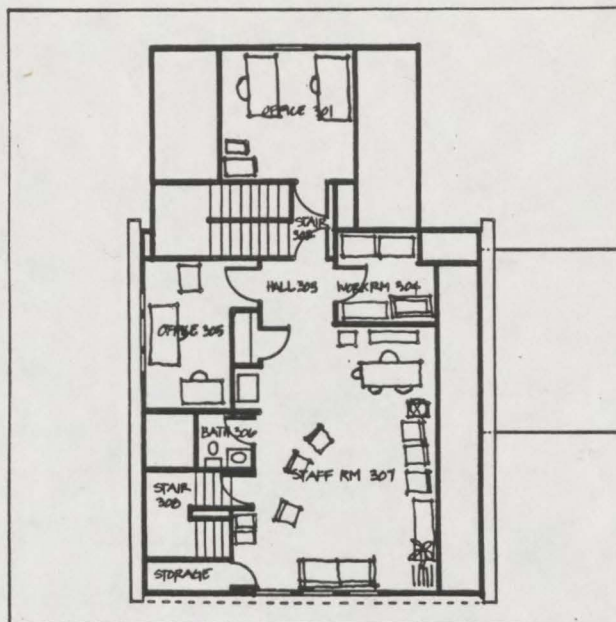
THIRD FLOOR OFFICES:

BOOKKEEPING (301)

FUNDING (303)

WORKROOM (304)

MEETING AREA/WORKSPACE (307)



Comments

BOOKKEEPING OFFICE

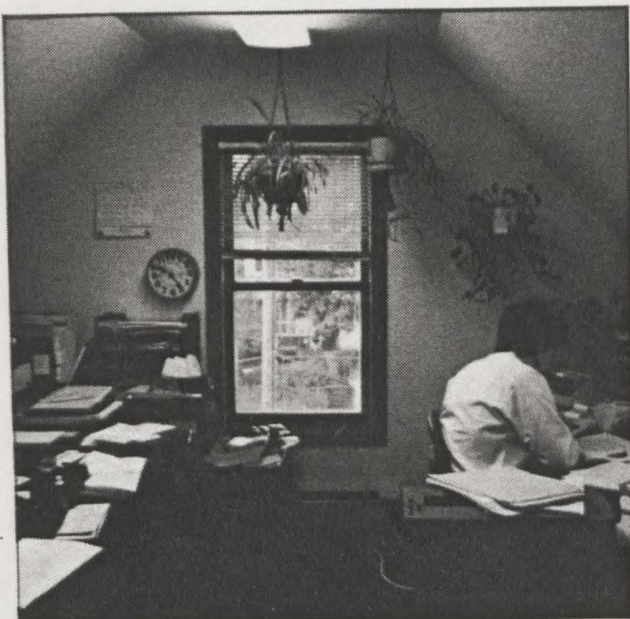
"No trouble. I work occasionally with the bookkeeper. It's a little crowded but there's a place to sit." (Resident)

FUNDING OFFICE

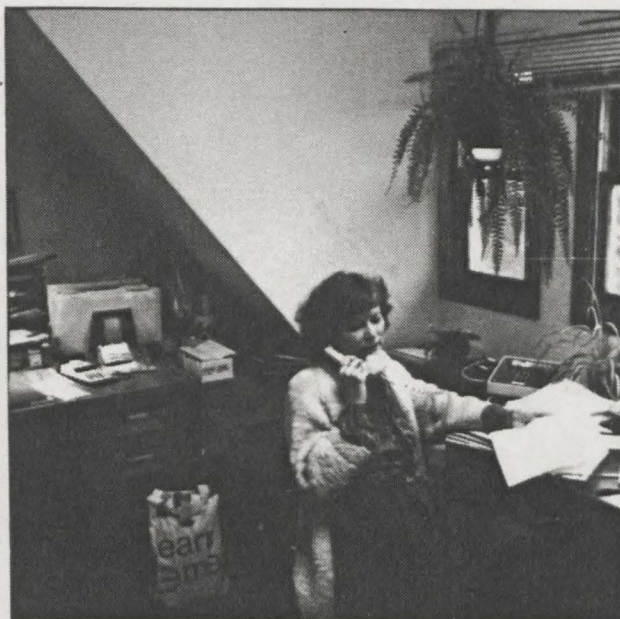
"There's not enough room for people who need to talk; they have to go to the meeting room (down the hall)." (Staff)

"We need more record storage, work area and desk space." (Staff)

Bookkeeping office (301)



Funding office (305)







Workroom (304)



Meeting area (staff room, 307)

#### Comments

##### WORKROOM

"It's still too noisy." (Staff)

##### MEETING AREA

"It's cozy and comfortable but has a feeling of being off-limits to residents." (Residents)

"If the chairs are in a circle, the acoustics are all right." (Staff)

"The big room is nice for meetings." (Staff)

#### Evaluation

The third floor staff area serves three main purposes: that of meeting area, that of private offices for funding and bookkeeping, and that of space for photocopying and storage. The meeting space is used for advocate meetings, joint advocate-resident meetings, and weekly support meetings of current and past residents. The work spaces are used for administrative functions. The offices are quite cramped, while the meeting space is unnecessarily large. Despite the pitched ceiling, exposed beams, hanging plants and track lights which make the meeting area the nicest place in the shelter, there is too much wasted space. This extra space could be allocated to office functions. Because the meetings occur in one end near the windows, an intermediate space has been created which is used for paperwork and storage related to the adjacent offices.



## Evaluation

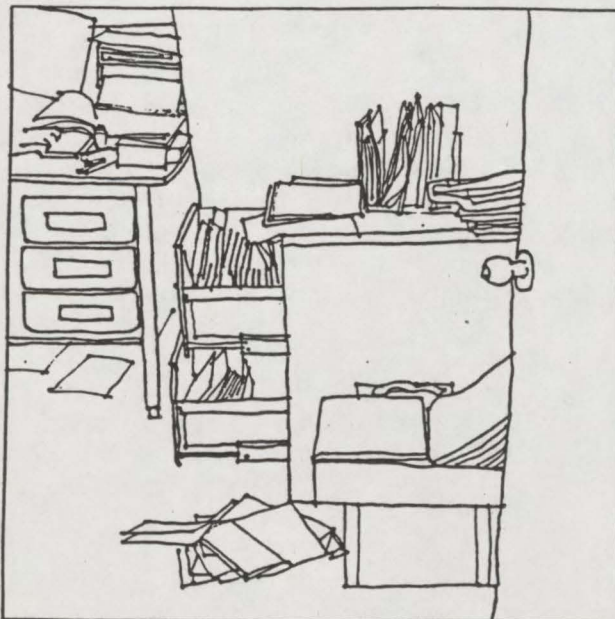
The problems with the third floor are that:

- the intermediate space isn't secure. Whereas the offices (with confidential records, etc.) are locked, the paperwork sits out in the open on tables.
- the individual offices (bookkeeping and funding) are much too small.
- the funding and bookkeeping offices, the machine room, plus the open workspace lack unity and an identity separate from the meeting area.
- the area between the offices, machine room, and worktables is used primarily for circulation. The area occupies as much space as one of the individual offices.
- an area needs to be set aside for snack preparation. As of now, snacks are placed on the same tables where working papers are left.

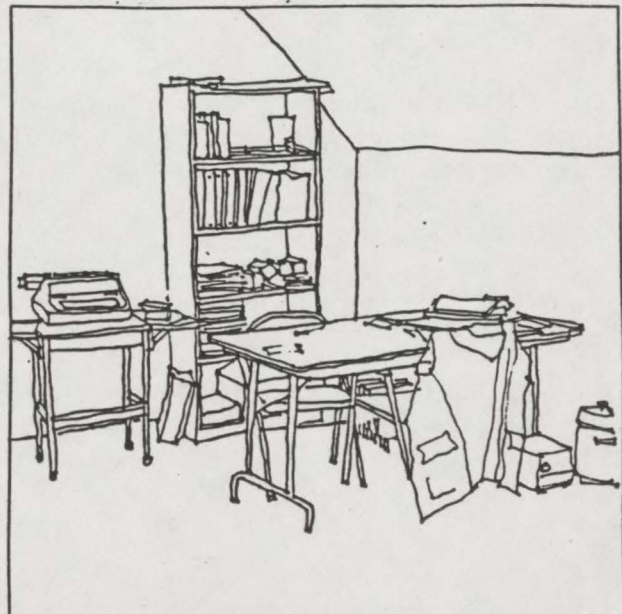
By adding a low barrier, such as a set of bookshelves, between the table and the meeting area, the intermediate space would be better defined. Storage space would be increased, and the disarray of the intermediate area would be hidden. The shelf surface could also be used for snack preparation. Another approach would be to add a complete wall to the meeting area instead of the low barrier. The wall separating the worktables from the machine room could be torn down, creating an entire workroom.

Additional space for the funding office might be gained by extending its walls into the circulation space, thus reducing the unnecessarily wide corridor and giving more identity to the office area.

Funding office - inadequate storage



Workspace/meeting room - work on the table, appliances on the floor





## 7. THE BACKYARD



Wheeled vehicles in the loop

### THE DESIGN

The two backyards had been neglected for years. The vegetation was overgrown and the paved areas broken. There was a bituminous surface near the building face, but most of the yard was just dirt. Most of the staff parked right up against the building.

Jim Robin, the Landscape Architect, saw the children as the prime users of the backyard. A lot of them were unruly and hyperactive, symptomatic of their traumatized experience in their households. He wanted to address their emotional needs in the design of their play space. He also recognized that the density of the child population in the shelter was extremely high; many mothers left their homes with all their youngsters.

Responding to those considerations and to that of safety, Jim's overall design fell into two basic zones: 1) a security area which included the children's play space and a small patio for residents to sit outdoors and 2) an area outside that security zone yet still on the property, including the service lane, the parking lot, and the garbage dumpster. The service lane brings deliveries to the perimeter of the security zone and up to the side door. Jim's assumption was that putting the service door in the east wall meant easy accessibility to both the first floor kitchen and the basement food storage area. The parking lot would require too much space if brought into the main backyard area, so Jim designed lateral parking for the alleyway which maintains as large a play yard as possible.

Overall, Jim wanted to minimize the impact of the backyard design on the central burr oak tree. He left it where it was and allocated a small, grassy area to surround it. Another essential feature of the backyard is the fence which presented a conflict of goals. On the one hand, the fence as an opaque barrier was crucial in assuaging the fears of the residents. On the other hand, if the fence remained totally opaque, the police would be unable to survey the shelter protectively. Jim also noticed that without a perforation in the fence for air flow, the backyard would get much too hot due to its southern orientation.

The fence design resolved the discordant issues. The slats of wood overlap, allowing air to pass through them. Simultaneously, they create an opaque visual barrier. As a compromise to the police and fire departments, Jim incorporated a chain link gate which allows police surveillance and would also allow a fire truck into the backyard if need be.



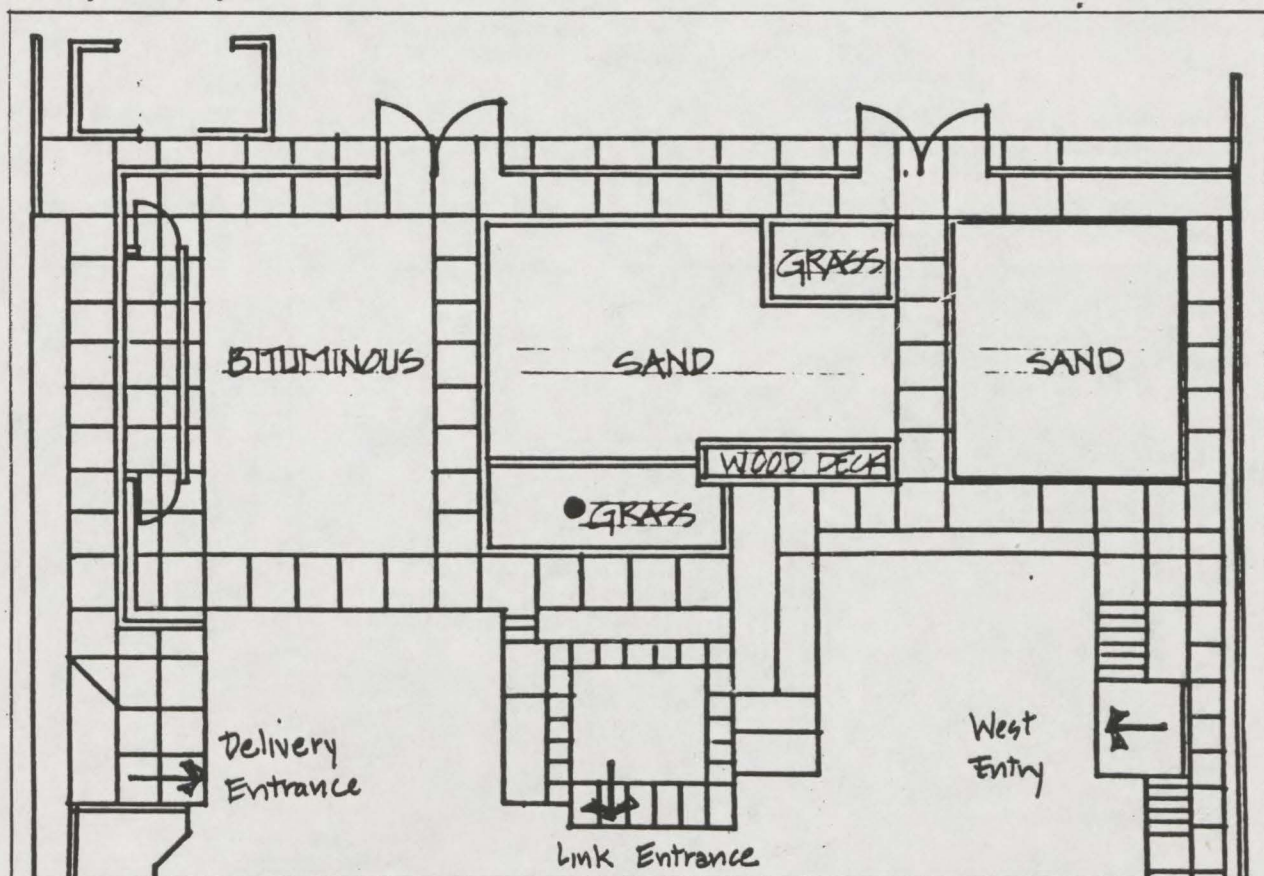
Jim realizes that some of the problems associated with his design include the great expense of the fence-style chosen. "It is a labor-intensive feature", he explains. But Monica Erler managed to raise the funds for it. "it is heavy, even overstructured, but that connotes security and acts as a solid barrier between the kids and an intruder."

A drawback of the chain gate is the amount of space left under one section. The children often crawl under it. One wonders if an intruder could penetrate the shelter the same way. Because of the grade of the hill, in order for the gates to open, they must clear the highest point of the hill and thus leave some extra space at the lower end.

Jim conceived of the play areas in three distinct zones which would deal with three types of child activities. One area permitted running games like basketball; the flat asphalt surface serves that purpose. One spot was seen as an unencumbered sand area, geared to the younger children who comprise most of the population. The third area was supposed to be for climbing, with a sand lot below to soften any falls. A local manufacturer makes a redwood play structure which Jim intended to be in the central spot of the yard. The budget constraints meant that the jungle gym was never purchased. Jim had hoped that the play structure would be the focal point of the backyard, allowing mothers inside to see their children easily.

Connecting the three zones is a network of hard, on-grade surface for wheeled vehicles. The continuous loop design allows for greater choices in circulation patterns, giving the kids more variety of movement than a linear path would. The path is also used for access into the shelter.

Backyard site plan





Other elements of the backyard include the small patio space Jim provided. He felt that it was a "neat spot because it's surrounded by structures on three sides...and is a reasonable spot for more secure women to come to enjoy the day." Unfortunately, rarely do any women use the area. The vegetation was also important. Jim specified green ash trees at the back of the yard because they are hardy in sandy soils and tolerate drought once they are established. He intended them to be planted closely together so that in a few years they would create a filtering canopy, "a community of plants." The canopy would convey the psychological sense of enclosure and security while making the whole area more pleasant. Due to budget restrictions, these have not been planted.

As in the front of the house, the lighting in the back of the house is affixed to the building. The lighting fixtures are relatively inexpensive. Security is enhanced by floodlighting.

### Evaluation

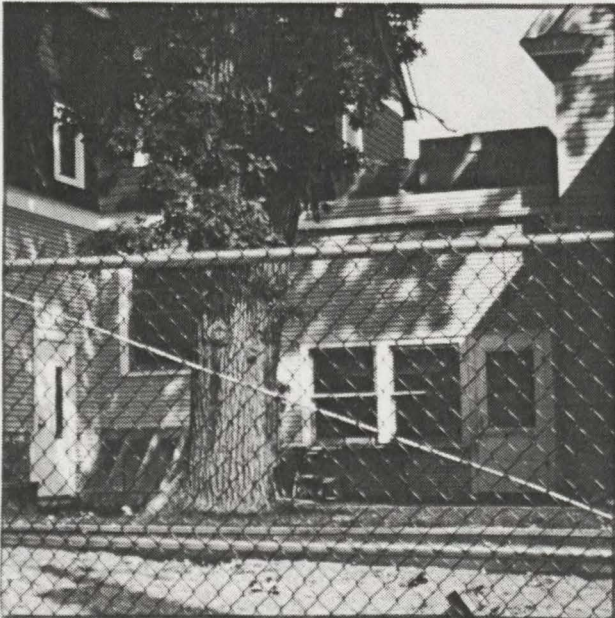
The backyard is very successful in its overall design. Especially outstanding is the circulation loop which really is used as was intended. Children use their tricycles and other wheeled vehicles with enthusiasm and regularity. The loop allows them the flexibility of movement which they thrive on.

One of the few problems with the backyard is that there is too much sand. The strip of grass around the burr oak tree is not sufficient to draw adults or older children to relax there. As a suggestion, the sandy lot in the middle of the yard (which was originally supposed to be the base of the jungle gym) might be transformed into a grassy area as an extension of the present strip. If the jungle gym is purchased eventually, it could be placed over the western sandlot. That way, more users' needs could be served.

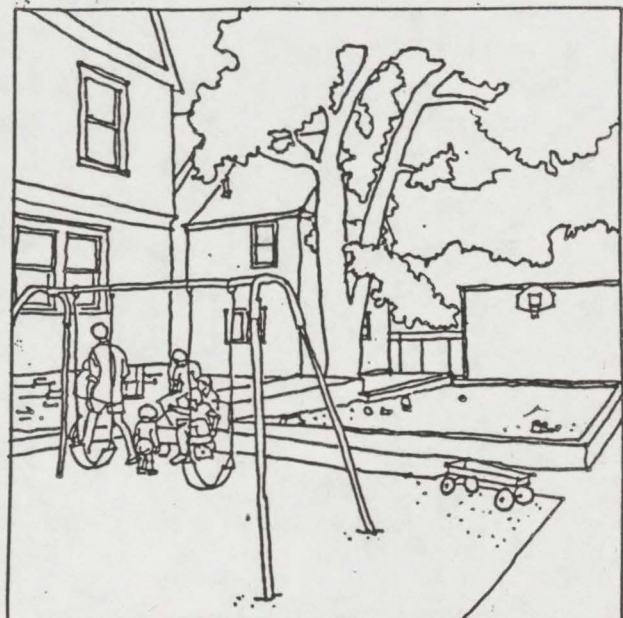
Another problem with the backyard has to do with security. One of the activities the children indulge in is climbing underneath the wire part of the fence into the alley. A depression has been made in the earth where this takes place. Perhaps if paving were extended to reach under this area of this fence, this could be prevented.

Lastly, in the original plans, one of the plants specified for planting (bittersweet, or *celastrus scandens*) has poisonous berries. Fortunately they were never put in the ground. Plants selected need to be safe in case a small child tries to eat them.

The backyard viewed through the fence

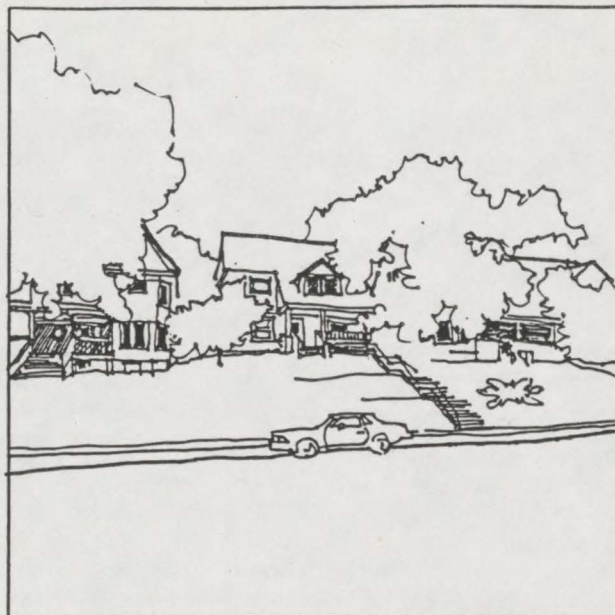


Backyard play area - too much sand





## 8. CONCLUSIONS



The Women's Advocates shelter renovation, when considered overall, is an architectural success. The use of two houses as a framework for the shelter kept the building at a residential scale both on its exterior and in its interior. The architects not only managed to maintain the essential qualities of a home, but also organized the internal functions efficiently and met existing code restrictions--a remarkable balance. Despite the general achievement of the rehabilitation, however, problems persist.

The shelter is vulnerable in terms of security. The entry area needs attention; ways to identify visitors need to be improved, the door locking system should be made to work. Throughout the shelter, all doors which are not functioning ought to be fixed or replaced. Children should be provided with easy access to a secure out-of-doors area.

As in any organization, Women's Advocates is not just a place, but also a set of procedures and rules. Regulations about smoking have a great impact on the use of certain spaces because so many women in this crisis situation smoke continuously. Restricting smoking in certain areas limits the use of those areas to nonsmokers. The relationship between smoking, safety, and use of areas requires careful consideration so that nonsmokers' rights and the safety of all are protected, and so that smoking does not disrupt the intended activities in any place.

Another area where administrative decisions have affected use of space is the basement playroom. In this case the decision-making is out of the direct control of Women's Advocates. Positions for the childcare program which was to happen in this space come from outside sources. If supervisory personnel for children continues not to be available, thought should be given to the best use of the playroom space. If the playroom areas continue to be assigned to children's use, consideration should be given to developing a structured parent-responsible program in that space.

The shelter residents need easier ways to make their living areas more home-like. Especially for families who are living in their sleeping areas for more than a week, these transformations are critical. Places for display of personal items or art selected by the resident would enhance the ability of the resident to identify a space as their own, albeit temporary, home.



One major flaw in the building design is the disorienting quality of the stairwells. Perhaps it is inevitable that an enclosed stair be somewhat confusing, but this confusion might be alleviated by identifying each stairwell as different by use of such things as wall color.

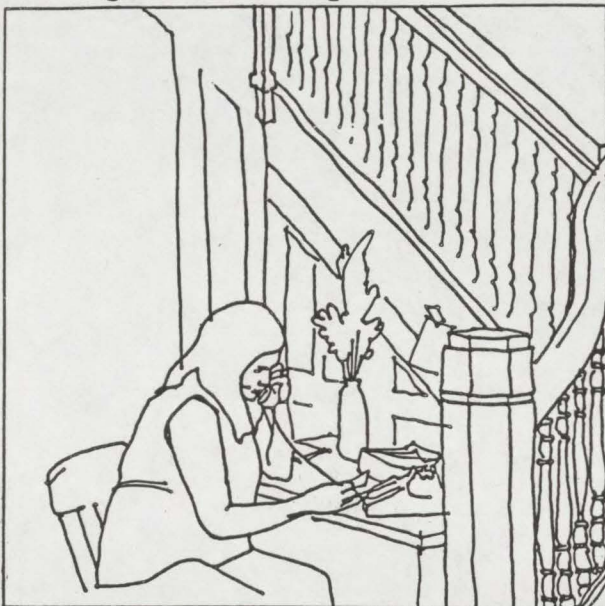
The residents' telephone has turned out to be a more important design element than originally thought. There is need for more privacy in telephoning and for more telephones accessible to residents than is presently provided.

The outdoor backyard area requires modification so that it can be better used. It should be made more secure. As was planned, a play structure of some sort ought to be added. Also, some part of the area should be designed to be used by older children.

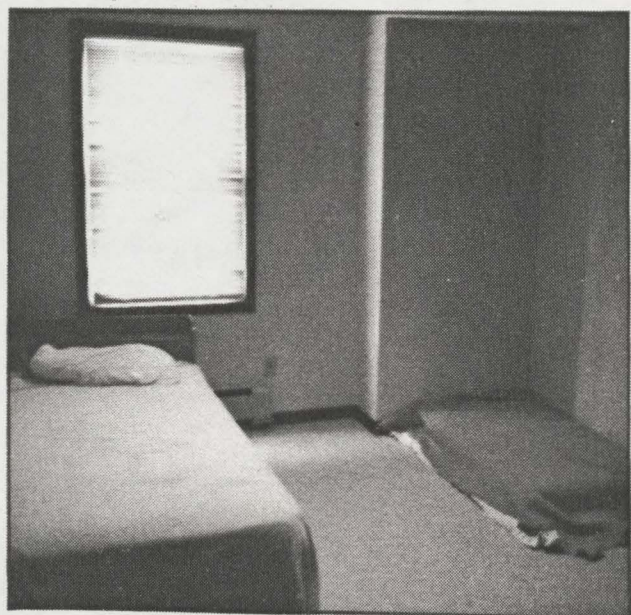
The combination of the one-story Link design with the openness of the first floor plan creates a highly trafficked first floor area. To counteract the openness which now exists, several discreet areas could be established. Furniture placement, for example, could break up undifferentiated larger areas. Children would be less able to disrupt the space with their running around. Quieter activities would have a greater chance to flourish. Combining this with better access to the outdoors should, at least in good weather, permit redirecting of much of the childrens' active play to the out-of-doors.

It is unfortunate that during the renovation, much of the original architectural detailing was lost. Because the present shelter is not completely furnished, it has a stark feeling. Choice of furniture and wall decoration is very important in creating a warm atmosphere in the shelter. Where items are purchased in bulk (beds, dressers, couches), there is a sameness between spaces which does not exist in private dwellings. Items which are selected for durability often have a hard institutional look to them and are dull in color. On the other hand, an environment with too broad a range of colors and styles looks like a hodgepodge and is ugly. Much careful thought needs to go into the acquisition of furnishings. Wall decorations were not yet in evidence when this study was done because of budget limitations. Wall decoration is important in softening a space both psychologically and acoustically. While a problem may exist in finding durable wall decorations, cloth wall hangings, posters mounted behind plastic, and colorful ceiling-to-floor curtains would enhance the environment significantly.

Before renovation: resident telephone and original stair railing



During evaluation, rooms were not fully furnished

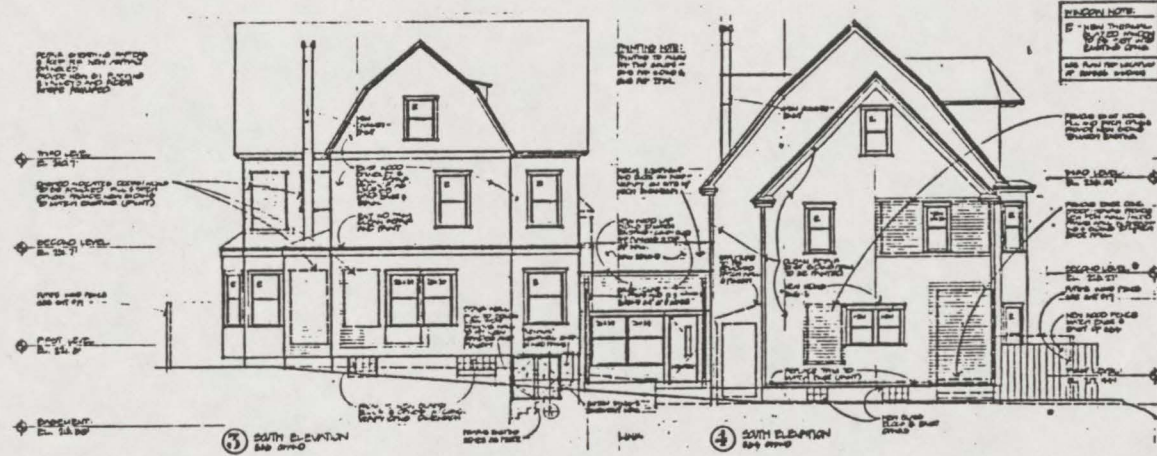
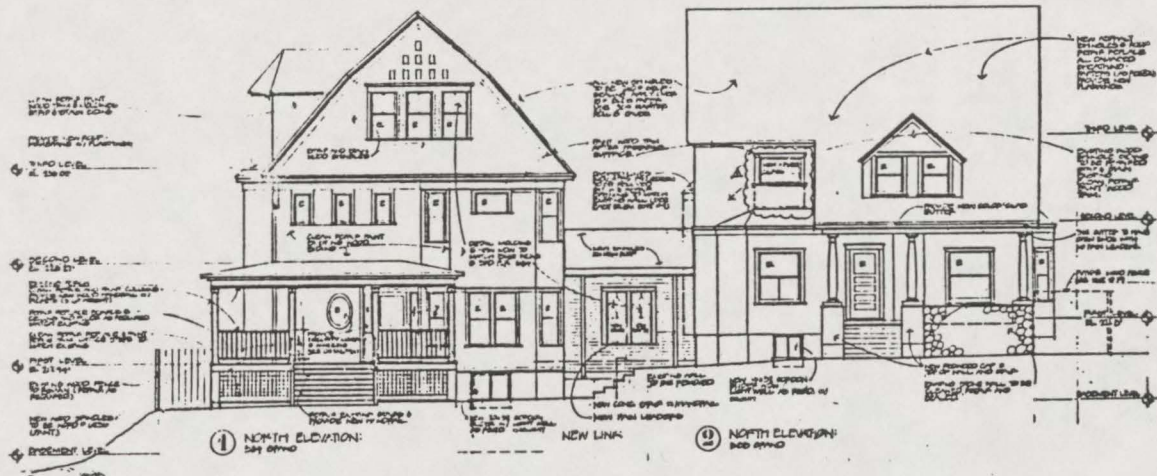


In a building of this kind, where there are a lot of children who are upset and aggressive, durability is of critical importance. Walls and floors are subject to a lot of abuse. In areas of high traffic such as stairwells, the architects have provided wooden wainscotting. This has functioned very well. In future buildings, the use of wainscotting could be extended to areas such as bedrooms and playrooms where children are sometimes left unsupervised. The materials in the Women's Advocates shelter (with the exception of two areas where plaster has been punctured) have stood up very well to the nine months of hard use they have been subjected to. Durability of materials is essential in keeping the image of the building cheerful and clean. By careful selection of textures and colors, the institutional feeling potentially induced by durability can be minimized.

Perhaps the most successful element of the Women's Advocates shelter is the appearance of the building from the outside. It looks like a house, not an institution, and thus blends in with the neighborhood. It conveys an image of quiet security and of welcoming the invited guest. This positive image is not supported by the entry experience. While the architects took great care in the design of this area, it does not function as they predicted. The entry itself makes identification of visitors very difficult. Thus a person who has come must wait for quite a long time at the door while this identification process takes place. Secondly, an entering guest is first confronted with a corridor where items such as diapers, boxes of clothing, and furniture are stored. The security elements need to be redesigned so that a visitor can be easily identified, and so that residents can be secure. Combining an intercom with a viewing window or peephole in a secure door would assist in this. Further, the first floor area needs to have storage facilities so that items are not stored in full view of the visitor.

When considering the quality of the design of the Women's Advocates shelter, it is very heartening to discover a building where so much thought and attention was given by the architects to the intentions of the clients. The attempt was made to understand fully the spatial implications of the activities which were to take place in the shelter. A thorough evaluation was possible because when they were interviewed for this study both the architects and the clients were conscious of the way the building was supposed to function. The residents also understood this. Thus, assessment was possible by everyone concerned, and there were many positive suggestions made for improvement. Evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the Women's Advocate shelter has been done not only to fine tune the existing instrument for advocacy, but also to assist others interested in building a similar shelter. With this information they may learn from what has been accomplished here, and apply that knowledge to further service of battered women and their children.



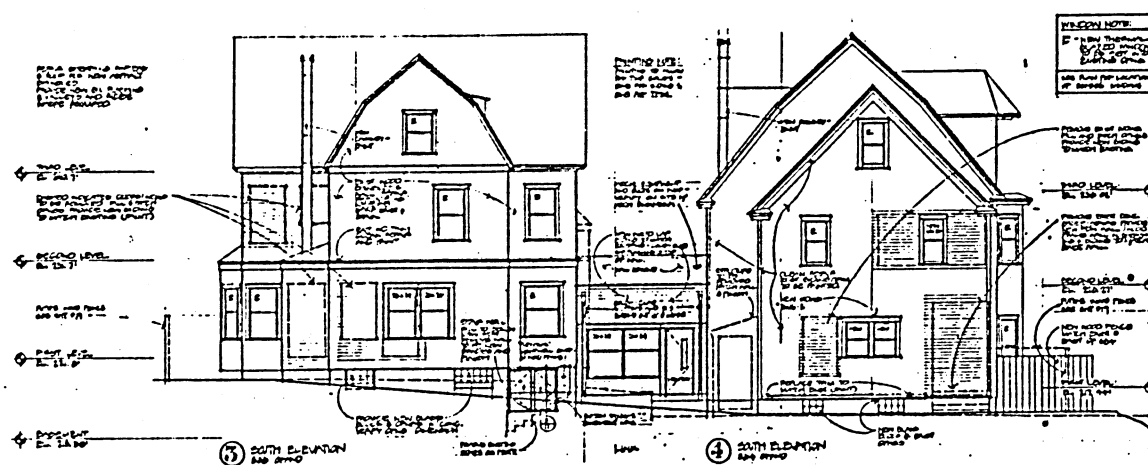
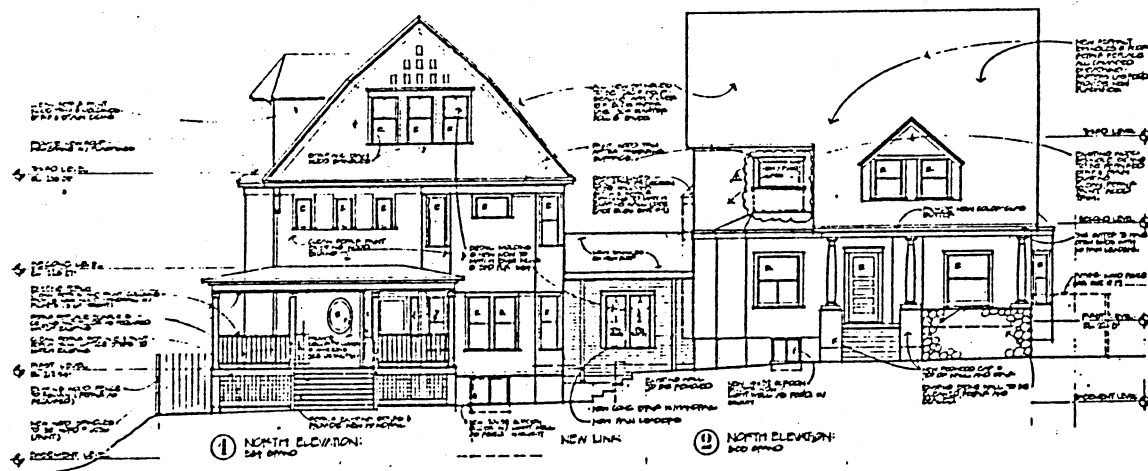


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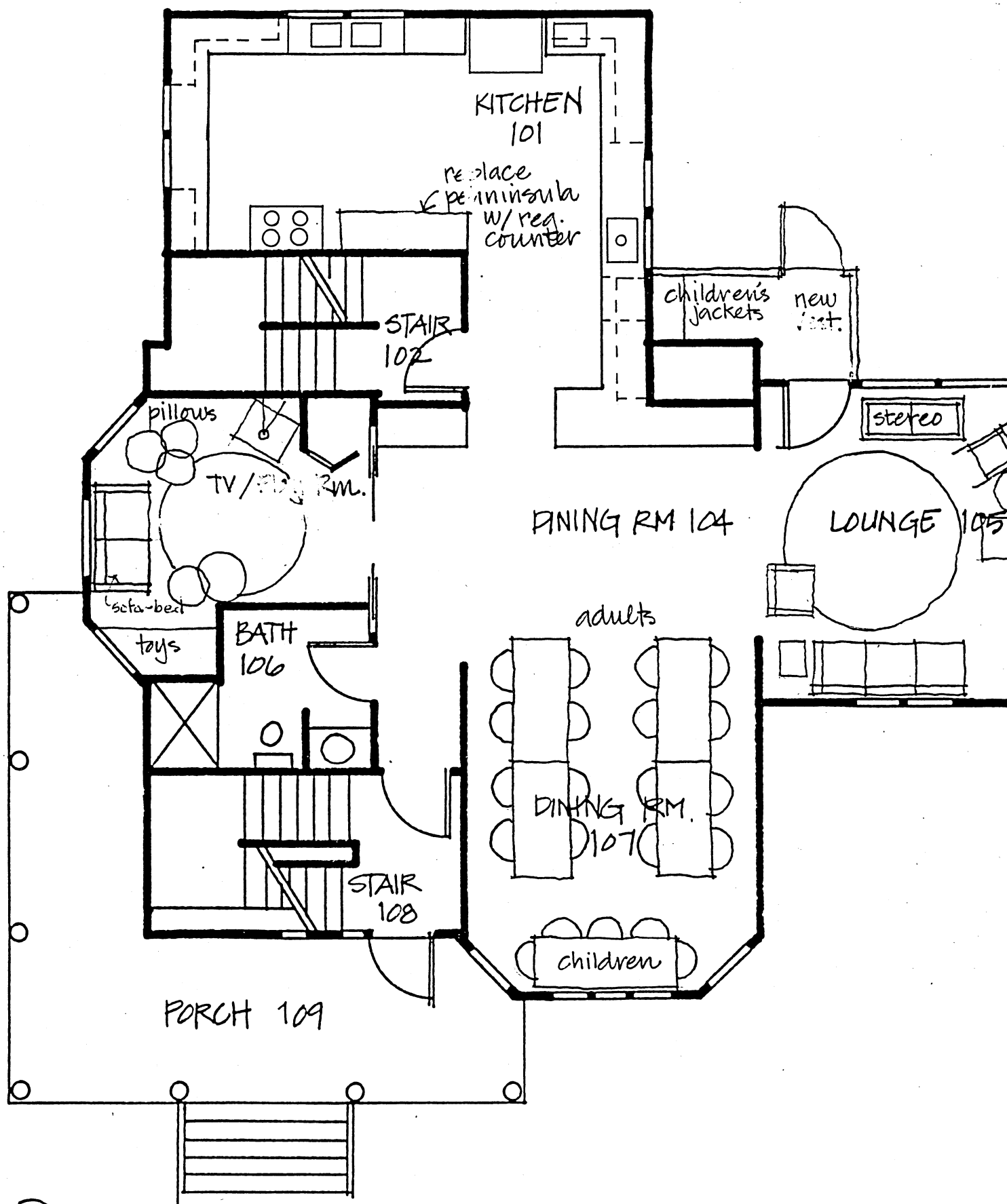
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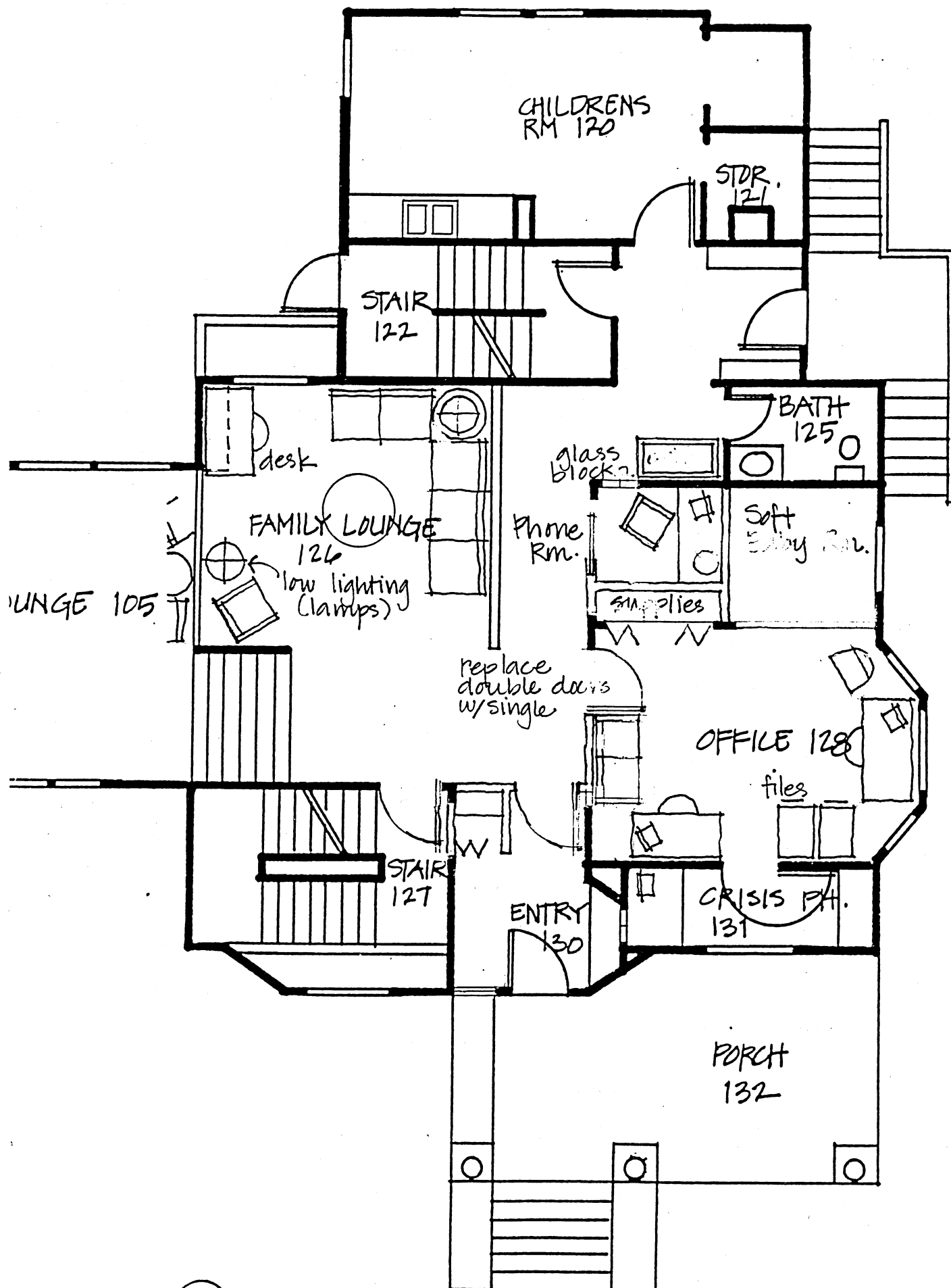
## APPENDIX I

### SUGGESTED MODIFICATIONS

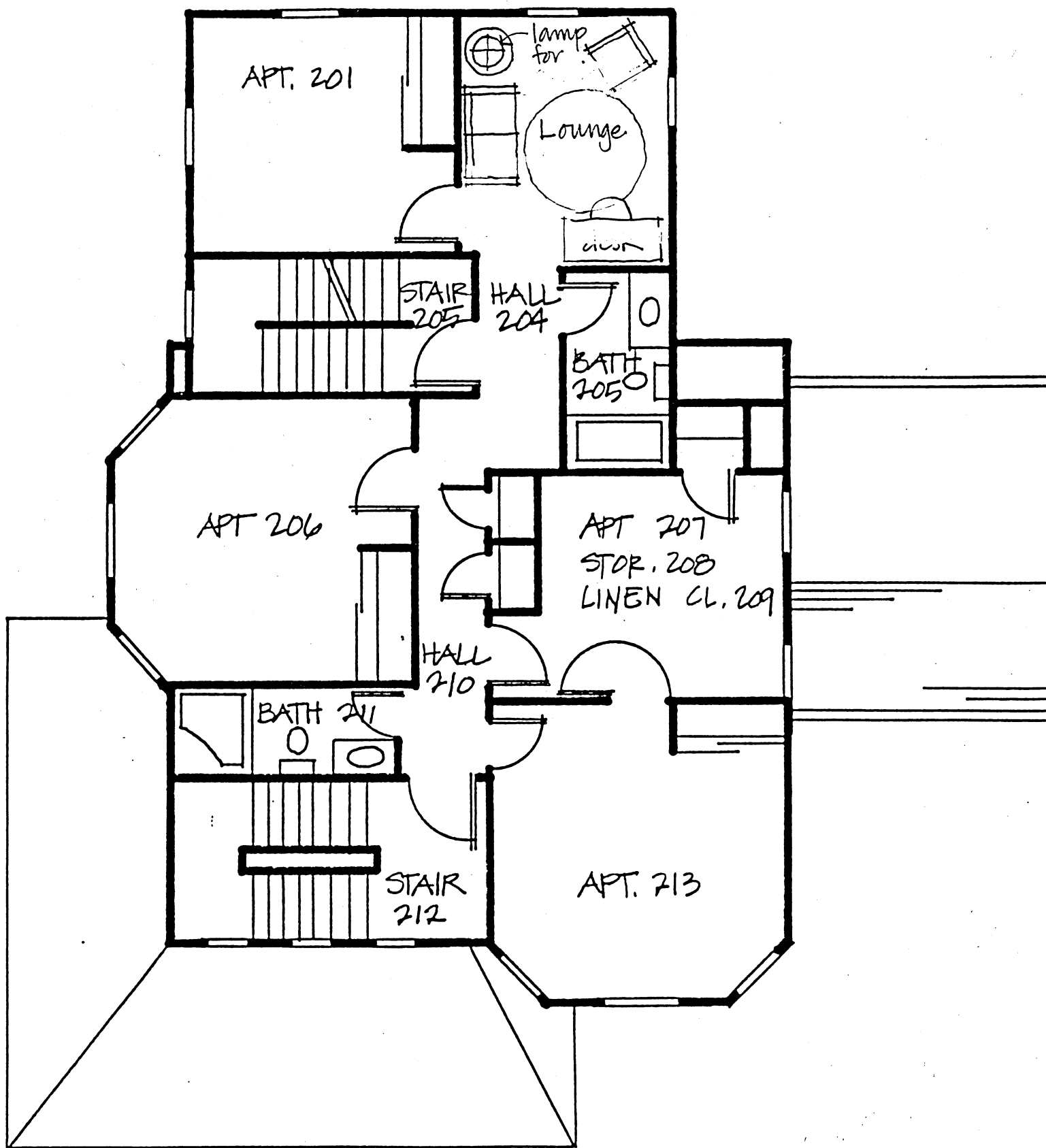


① FIRST LEVEL FLOOR PLAN - EAST



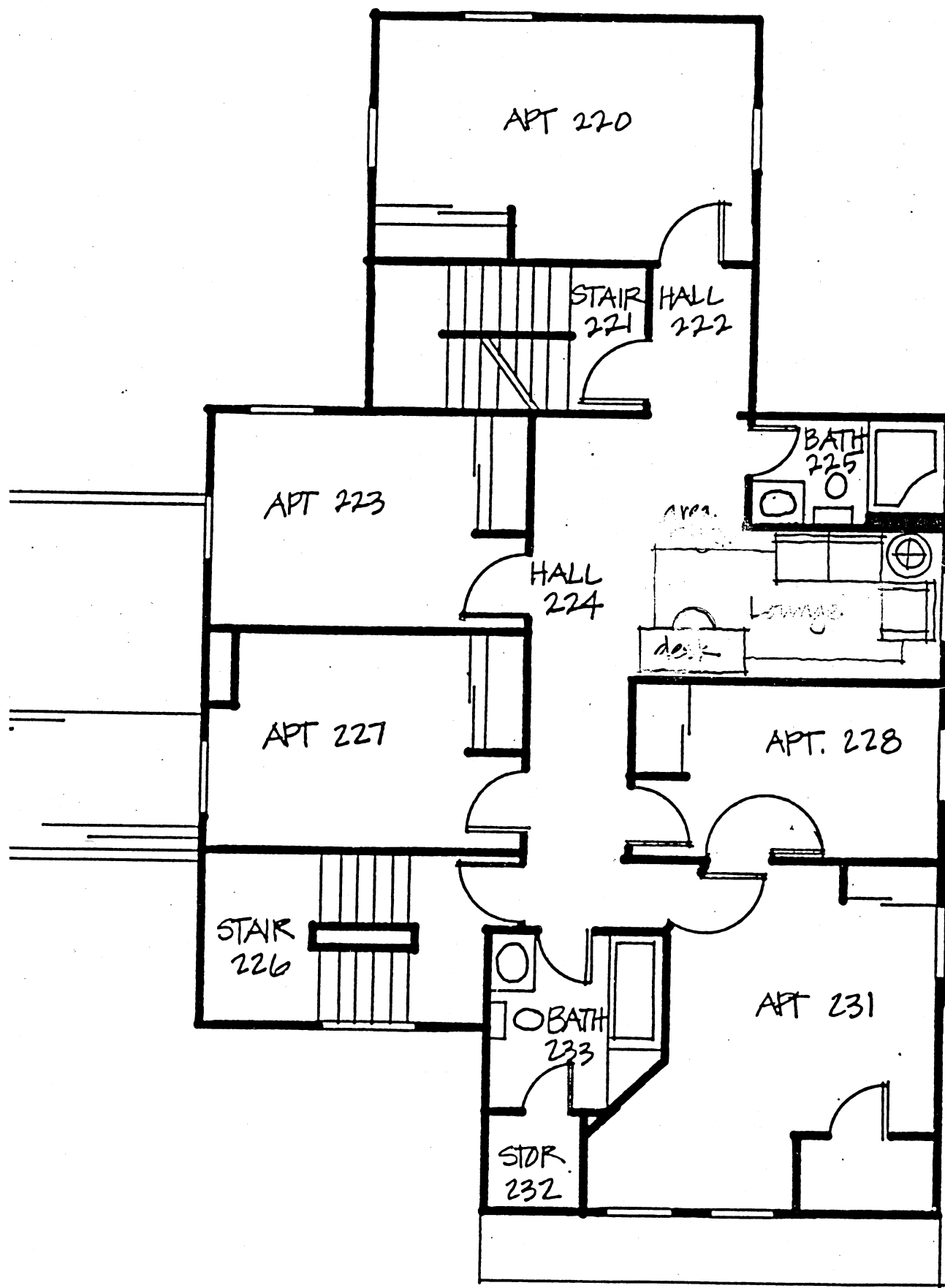


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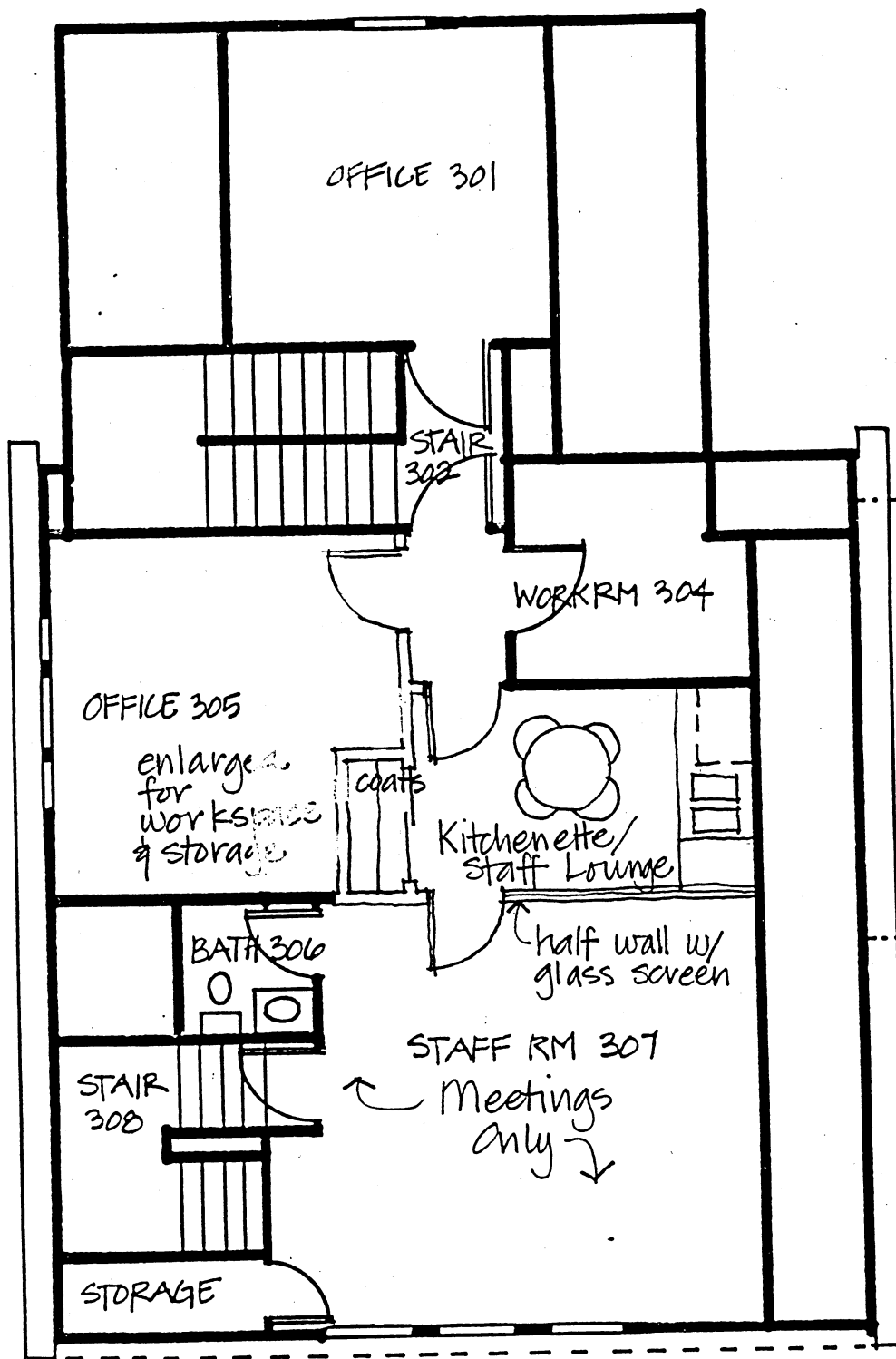


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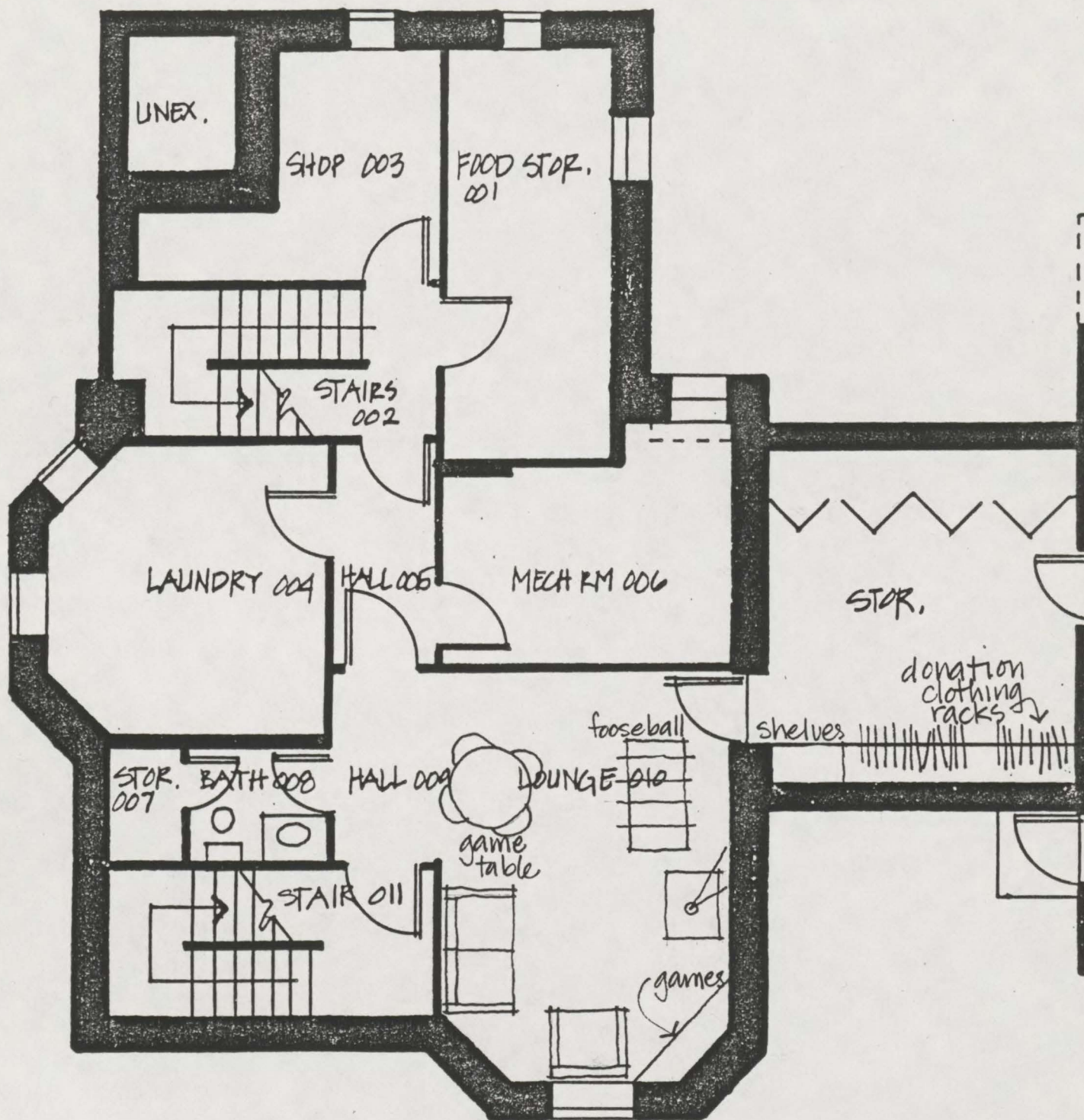


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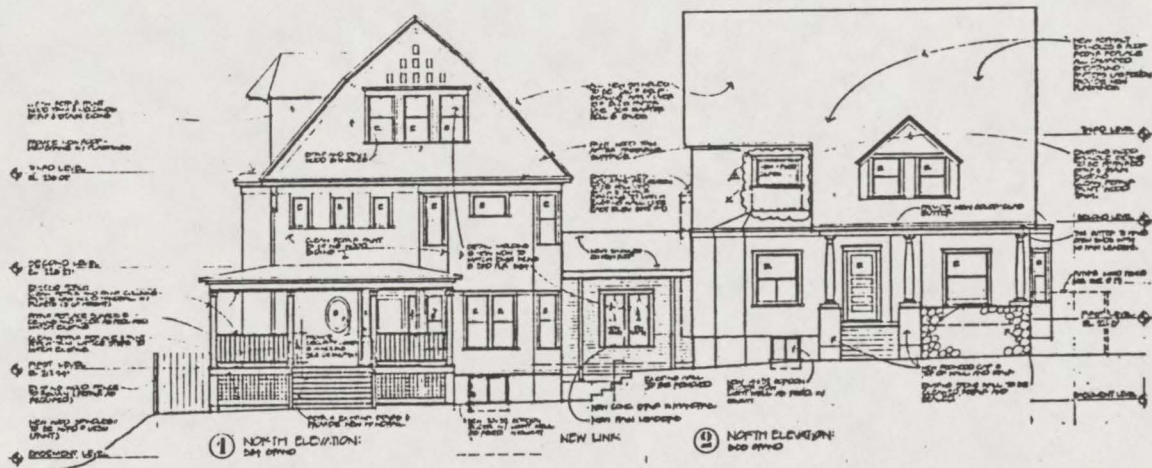


① THIRD LEVEL FLOOR PLAN - EAST





① BASEMENT LEVEL FLOOR PLAN - EAST



## APPENDIX II

### DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE ARCHITECTURAL EVALUATION



## DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE ARCHITECTURAL EVALUATION

### OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the architectural part of this study was to assess the design of a shelter for battered women, comparing its present functioning with the original design intentions, drawing conclusions relevant to the general problems of design of such shelters and providing specific recommendations for improvement of the shelter being studied. The investigation was to be very economical and quick (the research was completed and written up in a total of 280 hours of labor within a three month summer period). The development of the publication took additional time.

### METHODOLOGY

Three investigators participated. The principal investigator was assisted by two researchers, one who studied the present functioning of the shelter and another who studied the criteria and expectations of the designers.

Assessment of the shelter's functioning was done in a four segments. The shelter was documented in plan and in photographs. Participant observation of the shelter was done covering the 17-hour period of daily use of the shelter. Based on this, an interview format with open-ended questions was developed. Interviews were conducted with four advocates (staff members) and five residents (two mothers with one child and three mothers with several children). In addition, the behavior in each interior space was mapped in ten-minute segments spread over several days.

Interviews with the three designers were done informally, but with reference to the plans. The non-directed interview was used to ascertain the architects intentions with a minimum of bias.

### DATA ANALYSIS

Data were organized in the analysis by major spatial areas of the shelter and by design issues. Designer intentions were compared with interview responses and with observation data. Because the data collection took place during the summer, observation findings did not reflect use at other seasons. Interview responses provided description of use at other times, indicating several areas of difference. Behavior mapping ensured that each space was systematically observed and indicated the character of the use, but served mainly as a check for other data. Interview and participant observation were the most revealing sources of information.

### REPORT

The report is directed as much to designers and planners of similar shelters as to the Women's Advocates shelter staff and the housing agencies funding the study. For this reason the findings are presented so that what is particular to this shelter may be separated from that which is generic to all shelters. Emphasis is placed on graphic description of the architectural form so that the relationship between physical design and functioning may be clearly understood.

The report describes and evaluates the physical characteristics of the shelter and its functioning. The architectural form is documented with plans, photographs and line drawings. Line drawings are used to ensure anonymity of residents. Quotations from the interviews as well as observational description serve as commentaries on the shelter's design use. The design intentions are compared with actual use. Evaluations discuss positive and negative aspects of the design, offering, where necessary, recommendations for change in either design or policies of the residence.